

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

MUSICAL EXPERIENCE AND PROPHETISM IN GHANAIAN
PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY: A STUDY OF THE
MOUNT CALVARY CROSS MINISTRY



THEODORA ENTSUA-MENSAH

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PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY: A STUDY OF THE
MOUNT CALVARY CROSS MINISTRY

BY

THEODORA ENTSUA-MENSAH

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the Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of
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of Philosophy degree in Ethnomusicology

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Theodora Entsua-Mensah

Supervisor's Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Prof. Florian Carl

Co-Supervisor's Signature Date

Name: Dr. Eric Debrah Otchere

ABSTRACT

Music and religion are closely linked as seen in the use of music in many religious practices. Since the introduction of Christianity to sub-Saharan Africa, it has undergone several renewals with the current wave being Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity (P/c), which has been described as the fastest growing form of Protestant Christianity. Considered as experience-oriented, P/c presents the platform for exploring the experiential dimension of worship through music in the Ghanaian context. The purpose of the study was to examine the role of music in P/c ritual and to investigate the link between music and prophetism through the collective and individual lived experiences of members of the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry, a Ghanaian P/c church located in Accra. The ethnographic approach was employed. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2019 and 2021. The observation, interviews, and documents yielded over 30 prophecies/revelations related to music, and 13 shared religious/musical experiences. The data was analysed thematically and interpreted in relation to the theory of embodiment and Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality. The findings are that, music aids prophetism but it is not always a requirement in the performance of prophetic functions. The lived experiences of music and prophetism affirm the religious potency of music to trigger religious experiences when music-making is approached from the spiritual dimension through total engagement of both the material and immaterial aspects of the music-maker's personhood. Health and wellbeing are benefits of P/c music-making as adherents encounter hierophany via prophetism. Thus, the grooming of church music-makers should encompass the technical and spiritual dimensions in order to achieve the therapeutic effects of music in worship.

KEYWORDS

Musical experience

Religious experience

Prophetism

Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity

Embodiment

Musical service

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DEDICATION

In memory of my late father, the Rt. Rev. Hwl Entsua-Mensah and
the late Pastor Fillmore Nii Boye Hammond

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
KEYWORDS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
ACRONYMS	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Objectives	4
Research Questions	5
Significance of the Study	5
Delimitations of the Study	6
Limitation of the Study	6
Definition of Terms	6
Organization of the Study	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Introduction	11
Theoretical Framework	11
Theory of embodiment	11
Embodiment and religious experience	14
Embodiment and musical experience	17
Embodiment and musical entrainment	20
The concept of flow	21
Musical Experience	24
Phenomenology and Lived Experience in the context of Christianity	27
Lived religion and embodied practices	29
Lived Religion and Embodied Practices: Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Corporeality	30
Pentecostal experience	31
Prophetism in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity	32

Empirical Review	33
Music in Pentecostal/charismatic worship	33
Prophetism in Ghanaian Christianity	37
Music and prophetism	38
Chapter Summary	40
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS	41
Introduction	41
Research Design	41
The ethnographic approach	41
The Social Group under Study	43
Fieldwork	44
Ethical Consideration	45
Reflexivity and Positionality	45
Data Collection Procedures	47
Data Analysis and Interpretation	48
Chapter Summary	48
CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXTUAL/HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	49
Introduction	49
Pentecostalism and African Christianity	49
Pentecostalism in Ghana: A brief history	56
Music in Ghanaian Christianity	62
Music in the historic mission churches	63
Music in African Independent/Indigenous Churches (AICs)	66
Music in Pentecostal/charismatic churches	67
General church music practice	68
Chapter Summary	72
CHAPTER FIVE: MUSIC IN RITUAL: THE WORSHIP SERVICE IN MCCM	73
Introduction	73
The Setting	73
The Ritual Life of MCCM	76
The Nature of Music in MCCM	81
Music Performance	83
Chapter Summary	88

CHAPTER SIX: PROPHETISM IN RITUAL: THE FLOW OF SERVICES IN MCCM	89
Introduction	89
The Prophetic Ministry	89
The Flow of Services	91
The Vessels	93
The Role of Music in Prophetism	95
Prophetism, Intercessory Prayer and Music	99
Chapter Summary	99
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE MINISTRY OF MUSIC	101
Introduction	101
The Place of Music	101
Music Ministration	103
Choir Directing	113
Singing in the Spirit	118
A Sample of Worship	121
CHAPTER EIGHT: MUSIC AND PROPHETISM: COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES	129
Introduction	129
Prophecies Concerning Music	129
Ideas about music, music makers, and music making	144
Music-inspired prophecy	148
Benefits of worship	151
Divine accomplishments through music	152
Divine visitation through music	153
Chapter Summary	159
CHAPTER NINE: MUSIC AND PROPHETISM: INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES	161
Introduction	161
Lived Musical Experiences	161
The Wallace case I	163
The Wallace case II	164
The Coleman case	165
The Yalley case	167
The Anowa case I	168
The Anowa case II	169

The Fynn case	170
The Addy case	171
The Lamptey case	171
The Gharthey case	172
The Adjei case	173
The Hinson case	174
The Sackey case	175
Chapter Summary	176
CHAPTER TEN: RELIGIOUS/MUSICAL EXPERIENCE AND EMBODIMENT	177
Introduction	177
The Body in Pentecostal/charismatic Worship	177
The Body in Prophetism	180
The Body in Musical Experience	183
Lived Religious/musical Experiences in the P/c Context	185
Chapter Summary	187
CHAPTER ELEVEN: MUSICAL EXPERIENCE, PROPHETISM AND PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC SPIRITUALITY	188
Introduction	188
Pentecostal/Charismatic Experience	188
The Role of Ritual in the Social Productivity of Pentecostalism	190
Spontaneity	191
The Concept of Encounter	192
The Therapeutic Nature of P/c Worship	194
Musical Experience and Prophetism: The Link	196
Chapter Summary	197
CHAPTER TWELVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	198
Introduction	198
Summary of Key Findings	198
Conclusions	202
Recommendations	204
Suggestions for Further Research	204
REFERENCES	205
APPENDICES	225

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	The Mount Calvary Cross Ministry Choir (Senior Choir)	84
2	The Glorious Choir (Youth Choir)	84
3	Cross-section of congregation listening to song ministration with a sister standing as she is moved by the song	85
4	Pastors and congregation in a procession during worship.	85
5	The congregation in worship with lifted hands	86
6	Congregation during worship	86
7	Choristers lead the congregation during praises	87
8	The band and congregation in praises	87
9	Song 1 – Monna Nyame ase daa.	122
10	Song 2 – Wo ne Nyame a wo ma yedi yie	123
11	Song 3 – Yɛda W’ase a, ɛfata	123
12	Song 4 – Tete Nyame	125
13	Song 5 – Wo yɛ tete Nyame	125
14	Song 6 - Ancient of Days	126

ACRONYMS

AIC	African Independent Churches
GPCC	Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council
P/c or PCC	Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity
MCCM	Mount Calvary Cross Ministry

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Music and religion are closely linked as seen in the ubiquitous use of music in religious practices. The “religious potency of music” (Wynn, 2004) perhaps lies in its ability to trigger religious experiences (Demmrich, 2020). In African religious contexts, music is experienced and used in healing practices (e.g., Friedson, 1996) and in spirit possession (e.g., Platvoet, 2000). Music plays a significant role in the healing ceremonies of many African peoples, for instance, the Shona of Zimbabwe (Gelfand, 1964), the Zar cults of Ethiopia and Sudan (Boddy, 1989), and the Tonga of Zambia (Colson, 1969). Music is also used in healing ceremonies to invoke the gods (Twumasi, 1972; Bannerman-Richter, 1982). Religious adherents thus experienced music in various ways. Since the introduction of Christianity into the African setting, it is unclear whether music continues to play such roles in the expressions of Christianity.

Background to the Study

The sub-Saharan African religious landscape expanded as it embraced Christianity around the fifteenth century. Since then, African Christianity has undergone several renewals. The changing face of Christianity in the region has been attributed partly to “forces of religious modernization and globalization” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 2). Beginning with the historic mainline churches, the renewal movements brought about the African Independent Churches (AICs), also referred to as the Prophet-healing churches, then the classical or evangelical Pentecostal movement, which in turn produced the charismatic movement in mainline historic churches, the neo-pentecostals (also known as

the charismatic movement in Ghana), and the Prophet/Healer-centred Pentecostalist prayer camps. (Larbi, 2001).

The AICs sought to blend biblical belief and its attendant Christian liturgical forms with African religious concepts through prophetic activity (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). Since then, prophetism has been a theme in the discourse on African Christianity and more so with the current Pentecostal/charismatic (P/c or PCC) wave. But how the AICs employed music in the activities of their Prophet/healing churches seem to be largely undocumented. In Ghana, although the AICs have a peripheral role currently, they are considered predecessors to the P/c churches, and one of their main contributions to Christianity is “the normalisation of charismatic gifts in Christian expression” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 240). This is evident in Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity which is the fastest growing form of Protestant Christianity worldwide (Cassanova, as cited in Robbins, 2004). While the emerging literature on the current P/c wave in Africa focuses attention on prophetism, the experience of music in Pentecostal/charismatic ritual contexts appears to be an area unexplored.

At present, it is impossible to overlook the dominance and significance of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in the Ghanaian religious sphere. This is evident in the proliferation of churches with P/c inclination within the society. The numerous billboards advertising events within these churches with photographs of the “men-of-God” who are to officiate these services, and the presence in the media of a host of programmes which feature such ministers attest to this fact. Larbi (2001) noted in the early part of the twenty-first century

that, “in Ghana at present, the growing edges of Christianity in its most vital and dynamic forms are found in the Pentecostal-charismatic churches” (p. xii).

Studies on African Christianity in the recent past have shown that research focus has shifted from African Independent Churches (AICs) to Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity (Meyer, 2004). Described as “one of the great success stories of the current era of cultural globalization” (Robbins 2004, p. 117), Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity presents a platform for exploring the diffusion of values and ideas as well as music, and for assessing ways in which particular churches appropriate these within a given social context.

Statement of the Problem

It has been noted that one of the factors in the success of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is “the appeal of its ritual life”, however, “despite its widely acknowledged importance, detailed study of P/c ritual” as at 2004 was “notably scarce in the literature” (Robbins, 2004, p. 125). Research on P/c ritual has been steadily growing since then. The literature on Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity (P/c) has dealt extensively with the reasons for the growth of the movement (Robbins, 2004). Although it is generally acknowledged that music is an integral part of P/c ritual and has served as a great source of attraction for adherents of the P/c movement, few studies look specifically at the role of music in P/c in the Ghanaian context.

Again, Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity, as Lindhardt (2011) notes, is “foremost an experience-oriented kind of Christianity” (p. 8). In recent times, scholars are increasingly focusing on experiences of divine presence, which is seen to be effectuated by “the mobilization of the senses and the kinaesthetic, rhythmic, and oral engagement in ritual activities such as singing, dancing,

swaying, and praying” (Lindhardt, 2011, p. 9). The role music plays in the experiences of the divine in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity can thus not be overemphasized. In the African context also, the P/c prophetic ministries are becoming the focus of research in sociological, religious, and theological studies (Chitando, Gunda & Kügler, 2013; Muindi, 2012; Daswani, 2015; Aryeh, 2019; Quayesi-Amakye, 2011, 2015). Yet, it appears that little attention has been given to the musical experiences of congregations and individuals, and the link between music and the operation of prophetic gifts in specific P/c ritual contexts.

It is in light of the foregoing that the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry (MCCM) has been selected for study. The church, founded by Ghanaians, is a member of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC). It is relatively large with an auditorium that seats over a thousand congregants. It is perhaps one of the few Ghanaian P/c churches with a vibrant music ministry as well as a structured prophetic ministry with multiple ‘actors,’ thus, making it suitable for an exploratory study on music and prophetism.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the role of music in P/c through the collective and individual lived musical experiences of members of a specific P/c denomination, and to investigate the link between music and the operation of the prophetic and other gifts in that P/c ritual context.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the nature of music in the church’s ritual life and the music making processes
2. explore how music is utilised in prophetism

3. ascertain the collective and individual lived musical experiences of church members.
4. examine the relation between religious/musical experience and embodiment.
5. examine how the church's musical practice reflects Pentecostal ethos and spirituality.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. What is the nature of music and music-making processes in the church's ritual life?
2. How is music utilised in prophetism?
3. How is music experienced by members of the church community?
4. What is the relation between religious/musical experience and embodiment?
5. How does musical practice reflect Pentecostal ethos and spirituality?

Significance of the Study

This study will help to fill the gap in the literature with regard to the detailed study of P/c ritual, and help readers to understand how musical practice may be contributing to the rise of this global phenomenon, Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity, in the Ghanaian society. By examining musical experience and prophetism in MCCM, the study seeks to further enrich understanding of the essence and purpose of music in P/c contexts and contribute to the ethnomusicological discourse on sacred musical practices. It will also provide insight into Pentecostal ethos and spirituality through musical practice.

Delimitations of the Study

The study focuses on the collective and individual experiences of music and prophetism of members of a Ghanaian Pentecostal/charismatic church. Although the study gives a broad overview of musical content employed in P/cs in Ghana, it does not include detailed analysis of music in terms of form and structure. In addition, although prophetism is a key aspect of the study, detailed examination of spiritual gifts is beyond the scope of this project. Prophetism in this study is limited to prophecy/prophetic utterances, and revelations described by the MCCM Pentecostals as a “word from the Lord” and explained as word of knowledge or word of wisdom. It is also limited to the activities of the key ‘prophets’ (known as ‘vessels’) operating in the MCCM context.

Limitation of the Study

Through the observation of worship services and the examination of the church transcripts, extensive material on collective experiences of music and prophetic activity was gathered. However, access to many more individual participants was hindered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic made human contact difficult, hence the limited number of participants interviewed. Fortunately, those interviewed were mainly leaders and therefore the relevant information for the study was obtained, even though many more shared experiences would have enriched the study. In addition, some interviews had to be conducted in local languages, Fante and Ga, to be precise. The translation of these recorded texts encumbered the transcription process, but this was however surmounted.

Definition of Terms

Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity

Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity (P/c or PCC) is “the form of Christianity in which believers receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and have ecstatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophesying” (Robbins, 2004, p.117). Pentecostalism has emerged as “the most exciting and dominant stream of Christianity in the twenty-first century” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. 1). Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity has become a global phenomenon and as Meyer (2004) points out, this “new global brand of Pentecostalism thrives in Africa, Latin America, and Asia” (p. 452) with millions of adherents. The growth rate makes P/c “the most dynamic and fastest growing sector of Protestant Christianity worldwide” (Cassanova, 2001, as cited in Robbins, 2004, p. 118).

In 1980, according to Gifford (2004), “there were at least four recognizable strands of Ghanaian Christianity” (p. 20). First of all, there were the Catholics, then the mainline Protestant churches, followed by the established Pentecostals and then the African Independent Churches or AICs. Gifford adds that a new wave of Christianity, that of Charismatic (or as others prefer to call it, neo-Pentecostal) Christianity, however, swept the country from the late 1970s onwards. Explaining the terminology, Hackett (1998) notes that:

In Ghana, the term ‘pentecostal’ refers to the older churches (dating from the 1930s and often of Western provenance), while ‘charismatic’ is applied to the newer (post 1970, referred to by some Western scholars as ‘neo-pentecostal’), locally generated movements and ministries whose focus is healing, prosperity and experience. (Hackett, 1998, p. 259). For our purpose, the term Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity (PCC or P/c) will be applied here as has been done in some of the literature.

The AICs (African Initiated Churches/African Independent Churches/African instituted Churches/African Indigenous Churches) are churches which emerged from the prophetic campaigns of Wade Harris and others. They were designated AICs primarily because they were in direct contrast to the mainline churches of Western provenance. Because of their shared emphasis on the pneumatic elements of the Bible, AICs, also known as Spiritual Churches/*Sunsum sore*, and Pentecostal churches were earlier seen as belonging to the same church type. In Ghana, the term “spiritual churches” originally included classical Pentecostals. However, a distinction has been made due to sharp differences in theology and ethos (Larbi, 2001, pp. 68-69).

As a movement, Pentecostalism is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it differs from the other strands of Christianity by the way it affirms and consciously promotes the experiences of the Holy Spirit in church life. The term “charismatic” is derived from *charismata*, which means “gifts of grace”, and the aim of the charismatic movement is to revitalize church life through “the restoration of the *charismata pneumatika*, the graces of the Spirit, to its worship life” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p.6).

Researchers have noted the large body of churches placed under the rubric of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity. Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in the Ghanaian context and in this study includes the established or classic Pentecostals, and the neo-Pentecostals or charismatics and excludes the AICs.

Prophetism

For the purpose of this study and based on the research context, the term “prophetism” will be defined as “of or relating to the prophetic ministry”. The

spiritual gifts that form the core of the prophetic ministry are prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, and the discernment of spirits (Ollennu, 2019). These spiritual gifts, outlined in the Pauline writings (1Corinthians 12: 8 – 10) are “supernatural manifestations which cannot be acquired through any natural means. They can only be bestowed by the will of the Holy Spirit through His own supernatural means according to the assignment He has given” and the belief and desire of the believer (Ollennu, 2019, p. 97).

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into twelve chapters. Chapter One comprises the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and research questions, significance, delimitations, and limitations of the study and definition of terms. In Chapter Two, the theoretical framework, and key concepts related to the study are presented together with the empirical review. The research methods are the focus of Chapter Three, and it encompasses the research design, research approach, the study group, fieldwork, reflexivity and positionality, data collection procedures as well as the process of data analysis and interpretation. A contextual/historical overview is given in Chapter Four with a focus on the broader religious and musical contexts of the study. A description of the ritual life of MCCM, and the nature of music and its performance are the subject of Chapter Five.

Chapter Six looks at the prophetic ministry and the flow of services in MCCM. The ministry of music is discussed in Chapter Seven. Chapters Eight and Nine deal with the collective and individual lived experiences of music and prophetism in MCCM. The relation between religious/musical experience and

embodiment is discussed in Chapter Ten. In Chapter Eleven, musical experience and prophetism are discussed vis-à-vis Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality. Chapter Twelve presents a summary of the study, the conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study investigates the role of music in P/cs and the link between music and prophetism through the collective and individual lived experiences of members of MCCM, a Pentecostal/charismatic church located in Accra, Ghana. This chapter presents the theoretical framework, a discussion of key concepts related to the study, as well as an empirical review of literature related to the research topic.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of embodiment

The theory of embodiment has been utilized across many disciplines (Shilling, 2016). Turner's (2008) seminal text, for example, discusses extensively the evolution of sociological theories concerning the body and embodiment. In anthropology, the notion of embodiment has evolved as a fundamental paradigm for understanding the intricate links between culture, the body, and society (Csordas, 2002). This theoretical viewpoint emphasises that the body is more than simply a biological entity; it is also inextricably linked to social and cultural processes. The notion of embodiment has a long history that may be traced back to different major philosophers and anthropological viewpoints (Csordas, 2002).

Marcel Mauss is an outstanding academic who contributed to the creation of embodiment theory. Mauss (1973) investigated the manner in which physical practises and motions are culturally moulded and acquired in his major work on "Techniques of the Body" first published in 1935. He contended that

body methods like posture, gesture, and bodily comportment are taught and culturally distinctive, reflecting societal norms and expectations.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty is a key player in the growth of embodiment theory. Merleau-Ponty (1962) examined the lived experience of the body and its impact on how we see and comprehend the environment in his book "Phenomenology of Perception." He emphasised that the body is an active actor that mediates our interaction with the world and forms our subjective experiences, not just an inert object.

The idea of embodiment continued to gather pace in the second half of the 20th century by building on these basic writings. To examine the body and its cultural importance, anthropologists like Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, and Pierre Bourdieu made major contributions. They emphasised the significance of bodily practises, rituals, and symbols in the formation of social identities and the negotiation of power in a particular cultural setting.

Explicating the theory of embodiment developed by philosophers Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty as well as cognitive scientists such as Varela, Corness (2008) notes that these scholars argue against mind-body dualism, positing that the body as a whole is the inherent state of human experience. In other words, the collapse of dualities in embodiment necessitates that the body as a methodological figure be nondualistic, i.e., not distinct from or interacting with an opposed mind principle (Csordas, 1990).

In the phenomenological literature, the function of the body in the formation of the "subjective matrix of experience" varies widely (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994). Merleau-Ponty was perhaps the most explicit in his work on the phenomenology of perception in recognising the significance of the body as an

agent of experience. The body is thus not merely an object subject to examination; it is also the point of origin for our worldly experiences (Desjarlais & Throop, 2011).

Csordas (1994a) argues that embodiment should form the basis for reconceiving the nature of culture and our existence as cultural beings, based on the argument of Marcel Mauss that the body is simultaneously the original tool with which humans shape their world and the original substance from which humans shape their world. For Csordas (1994b), embodiment is a methodological perspective in which bodily experience is viewed as “the existential ground of culture and self”, and thus as a valuable beginning point for their analysis.

In his seminal book, *The Sacred Self* (1994c), however, Csordas speaks of bodily experience as “the existential ground of culture and the *sacred*” (p. ix, emphasis added). According to Csordas (1994c), the sacred is a touchstone of humanity and an existential experience with Otherness. It defines us in terms of what we are not, in terms of what is outside of or right up against our boundaries. Our embodiment serves as the phenomenological grounding for this sensation of otherness. In analysing religious/musical experience, then, the body becomes the focal point.

In brief, the anthropological idea of embodiment has developed over time, including a variety of theoretical stances and intellectual traditions. It provides an important foundation for comprehending the complex relationships between culture, society, and the body. This theoretical approach enhances our knowledge of human behaviour and the ways in which bodies are implicated in

social life by looking at the cultural moulding of physical practises and the embodied experiences of individuals.

Embodiment and religious experience

Religious encounters with the divine are intensely subjective and individualised, frequently characterised by emotions of awe, transcendence, and connectedness to something greater than oneself. The idea of embodiment is one of the theoretical frameworks that have been used to analyse and understand these experiences. Turner (2008) examining the interplay between religious practices and bodily experiences argues that religion is deeply embodied. According to the notion of embodiment, religious experiences are fundamentally based in the materiality of human existence and the body rather than being only cognitive or abstract. A consideration of the major ideas and implications of the notion of embodiment in religious experience is needed for a better understanding of the nature of religious encounters.

Embodiment and the religious self

The philosophy of embodiment contends that the physical self is fundamental in determining how one experiences religion. According to Johnson (2007), embodiment is the belief that people are their bodies rather than just having one. The body is viewed as a conduit via which people interact with the divine in religious experiences. The perception of transcendence and spiritual connection is said to depend on the bodily sensations, motions, and rituals involved in religious practises.

Dimensions of the senses and perception

As scholars have noted, sensory perception affects social interactions (Vannini et al., 2013). In proposing a “sociology of the senses”, Vannini et al. (2013) examine the crucial functions that sensory perception serves in

structuring social existence. The sociology of the senses is intricately linked to the notion of embodiment, since both domains underscore the significance of the body and sensory experience in comprehending social existence. Embodiment encompasses the consciousness of possessing a body and the internal processes occurring within it, whereas the sociology of the senses investigates the interaction between our bodies and the external environment (Csordas, 1999; Howes, 2010).

The senses are essential to identity and physical involvement, influencing our interactions and relationships. Scholars posit that sensory experience is shaped by social and cultural influences, rather than being solely a physical process (Vannini et al., 2013). Our bodies are conditioned through socialisation to identify and experience specific physical sensations, affecting our movement, reactions, and perceptions of the world. The notion of embodiment and the sociology of the senses both contest the dichotomy between mind and body, feeling and perception, as well as the person and the external environment. Researchers advocate for a post-dualist viewpoint in which feeling and perception are interconnected, and the body plays a crucial role in our experience and understanding of the world (Vannini et al., 2013).

As mentioned earlier, sensory experiences are influenced by culture. For instance, in *Culture and the Senses: Bodily ways of knowing in an African community*, Kathryn Geurts examines the cultural significance and sensory experiences of the Anlo-Ewe community in southeastern Ghana. Geurts's (2003) ethnography demonstrates that the Western five-senses framework holds minimal significance in Anlo society, where 'balance' is regarded as a sense and an essential component of humanity. The research highlights kinaesthesia,

which is esteemed in Anlo society, and demonstrates the variability of sensory systems between cultures.

What of the senses and religious practices, then? Religious experiences also frequently entail sensory and perceptual aspects that are intimately related to embodiment. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), since our body senses provide us instantaneous access to our surroundings, our perspective of the universe is inherently embodied. Religious experiences may be profoundly emotional and spiritually moving when sensory stimuli like music, incense, and holy settings are present. This heightens one's feeling of presence and connection to the divine.

Ritual and embodied practice

Rituals are important components of many religious traditions and are seen as embodied practises that support religious experiences. According to Csordas (1994), rituals use physical gestures, postures, and motions to evoke an embodied involvement in the religious act. People may experience a stronger feeling of connection via repeating movements and physical involvement, which can result in life-changing encounters with the divine.

Embodied metaphors and symbols

In religious language and speech, embodied metaphors and symbols play an important role. Metaphors, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), are not merely cognitive creations but are also anchored in physical experiences and bodily interactions with the environment. To transmit spiritual truths and improve understanding within the religious community, religious writings and teachings frequently use metaphors that rely on physiological experiences such as light, darkness, birth, death, and resurrection.

Finally, the idea of embodiment provides a useful framework for comprehending the complex link between the body and religious experiences. This idea emphasises that religious encounters are not solely cognitive, but are profoundly anchored in the physicality of human existence by highlighting the significance of the body, sensory perceptions, rituals, and embodied metaphors. Exploring the topic of embodiment gives insights into people's lived experiences and opens up new options for research in religious studies. However, embodiment from the P/c perspective requires further investigation.

Embodiment and musical experience

Corness (2008) examines the nature of music as embodied experience and posits that regardless of the medium used to create it, music is an experience that is fundamentally physical and is felt via the body's senses. The idea of embodiment posits that our bodily interactions with the environment profoundly impact our experiences and knowledge of it. This idea extends to musical experience, implying that our involvement with music is intricately connected with our bodily and sensorimotor connections rather than being restricted to aural awareness alone. An examination of the embodiment theory in respect to musical experience will thus focus on how our body and actions impact our perception, interpretation, and emotional involvement with music.

The concept of embodied perception holds that our physical sensations and movements play an important part in creating our perception of music. Researchers have discovered that when we listen to music, our motor system is stimulated, implying a clear link between auditory processing and movement planning (Leman, 2007). This activation allows us to cognitively imitate the physical activities involved in making the sounds we hear, resulting in a more

rich and immersive musical experience. Sensorimotor synchronisation, or the alignment of our motions with the rhythmic and temporal structure of music, is another facet of embodiment in musical experience. Sensorimotor synchronisation occurs when we tap our foot, nod our heads, or dance to music. This approach not only strengthens our connection to the music but also allows us to synchronise our movements with those of others, producing a feeling of social bonding and communal experience (Phillips-Silver and Keller, 2012).

The role of expressive movements in expressing and understanding musical meaning is also emphasised by embodiment theory. Musicians employ subtle motions, facial expressions, and gestures to convey their perception of the music (Godøy, 2006). These body expressions help us grasp the emotional content of the music and foster a stronger bond between the artist and the listener. Embodied musical experiences include emotional participation as well as bodily motions and gestures. According to the notion, our physiological sensations and emotional reactions are linked, and physical encounters with music can trigger certain emotional states. For example, studies have shown that particularly moving or strong musical sections can elicit physiological sensations such as shivers or goosebumps, heightening the emotional effect of the music (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010).

Thus, the embodiment theory emphasises the inextricable relationship between our body and musical experience. Our physical interactions, sensorimotor synchronisation, expressive gestures, and emotional involvement all contribute to a comprehensive knowledge and pleasure of music. Recognising the embodied aspect of musical experience allows us to appreciate the intricate interplay between our bodily selves and the audible universe.

In African traditional worldviews, the concept of the body is deeply intertwined with spirituality, health, and the interconnectedness of life (Mbiti, 1990; Ter Haar, 2009). This perspective emphasizes a holistic understanding of human existence, where the physical body is seen not just as a biological entity but as a vital component of a larger cosmic order (Olupona, 2014; Bojuwoye, & Moletsane-Kekae, 2018).

African traditional beliefs often posit that the human body is a microcosm reflecting the universe's broader elements and forces (Mbiti, 1990; Olupona, 2014). The body is viewed as part of a spiritual continuum, where health and illness are not merely physical states but also involve spiritual dimensions (Bojuwoye, & Moletsane-Kekae, 2018). Illness can be seen as a disruption in the harmony between the individual and their environment, including social relationships and spiritual connections. Thus, healing practices often encompass both physical treatments and spiritual rituals aimed at restoring balance and harmony within the individual and their community (Bojuwoye, & Moletsane-Kekae, 2018).

In African traditional religion, the body is central in healing practices and spirit possession, as Friedson (1996) establishes in his study of traditional healers and music in northern Malawi, specifically, Tumbuka healing, that there is a departure from Cartesian duality. He notes that, in the context of the dancing prophets, “the body has an ontological status different from its status in Western conceptions of the individual” (Friedson, 1996, p. 5). He further points out that, in that context, musical experience “is more than just an acoustical phenomenon; it penetrates directly into the realm of bodily existence” (Friedson, 1996, p. 168). The dimension of possessing spirits changes the dynamics in these experiences.

Thus, when it comes to musical experiences relating particularly to spirit possession in African traditional religion, embodiment takes on a whole new meaning.

Embodiment and musical entrainment

According to embodiment theory, cognitive processes are inextricably linked to physical sensations and sensorimotor interactions with the environment. This theoretical framework has been applied to a variety of fields, including music, where it has shown to be a useful lens for comprehending the phenomena of musical entrainment. Musical entrainment is the synchronisation of physiological, cognitive, and emotional processes between people and music, resulting in a shared rhythm and timing experience (Clayton et al., 2005).

According to Leman (2007), the theory of embodiment proposes that music perception and interpretation are affected not just by the auditory system but also by body motions and sensorimotor interactions. Through movement and physical involvement, the human body serves as a resonator, allowing humans to sense and internalise musical patterns. This embodied interaction with music promotes the synchronisation of physiological reactions and cerebral processes, resulting in a sensation of entrainment.

Furthermore, embodiment theory emphasises the social side of musical entrainment. Clayton et al. (2005) introduced "entrainment-as-dialogue," which emphasises the reciprocal engagement between performers and their audiences during a musical performance. Musicians connect and engage with their audiences through physical motions, resulting in a shared rhythmic experience. This social aspect of entrainment emphasises the necessity of embodiment in the musical arena.

Finally, the notion of embodiment provides a useful foundation for comprehending musical entrainment. The embodiment viewpoint emphasises the relevance of body motions and sensorimotor interactions in musical rhythm perception, interpretation, and synchronisation. A better understanding of the complicated mechanisms behind musical entrainment can be acquired by analysing the interplay between cognition, perception, and physical involvement. As Clayton et. al (2005) point out, however:

To prove the occurrence of entrainment, ..., and to describe specific entrainment processes in detail, will require the collection and analysis of timing data derived from the musical sound, from observed motor movements and/or from other physiological processes associated with the performance (p. 22)

However, such analysis is beyond the scope of the current study on MCCM as no timing data was collected. The reference to entrainment is basically for the reason that it is a factor in music-making in general, as noted by Clayton et. al (2005) thus: “If entrainment is a factor in any interpersonal interaction and communication, we should expect that it is a factor in any variety of musicking” (p.21).

The concept of flow

Flow, a term coined by the renowned psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, describes a state of optimal human performance and engagement in which individuals become completely absorbed in an activity and feel a profound sense of enjoyment and fulfilment. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), flow occurs when a person's skills and abilities align precisely with the challenges of a task. In this state, individuals lose track of time

and self-awareness as they become thoroughly absorbed in the present moment. They are intrinsically motivated, experiencing a profound sense of fulfilment and a heightened sense of control over their actions.

Flow experiences can be found in various domains of life, including the workplace, pursuing a vocation, and engaging in sports or the arts. When in a state of flow, one enters a heightened state of concentration and effortless performance. In these instances, people realise their true potential and feel a profound sense of well-being. The benefits of flow experiences have been substantiated by research. Flow is characterised by increased creativity, productivity, and overall life satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Flow has also been associated with positive psychological states such as contentment, intrinsic motivation, and a sense of meaning and purpose (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Although Csikszentmihalyi's research primarily focused on flow in relation to sports, the arts, and employment, his theories have been applied to and modified to comprehend flow experiences in religious and spiritual contexts. Flow can be interpreted as a feeling of profound connectedness and transcendence in the context of religious experiences. People frequently reach a state of flow during religious ceremonies, meditation, or prayer where their attention is totally focused on the experience. They might become completely unaware of themselves at these times and experience a strong sensation of unity with a higher power or a more transcendent spiritual reality (Hick, 2004).

A few aspects of flow experiences are similar to the components of religious experiences. First of all, there is a sense of quick feedback and clear goals in both flow and religious experiences. People who are in flow are fully

aware of the task at hand and get instant feedback on how they are doing. Similar to this, religious experiences frequently include specific rituals, prayers, or contemplative practises that offer an organised framework and quick feedback in the form of a spiritual connection or peaceful sentiments.

Second, both religious experiences and flow experiences necessitate striking a balance between competence and challenge. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), flow happens when a person's degree of expertise and the activity's difficulty are both appropriate. People may suffer difficulties in their religious experiences when trying to strengthen their spiritual ties, settle internal conflicts, or find solutions to existential concerns. People who participate in religious activities that present the right amount of challenge can enter a state of flow where they experience personal growth and fulfilment.

Additionally, a sense of timelessness and a loss of self-consciousness are features of both religious and flow experiences (Monson, 2012). When in flow, people lose all awareness of their anxieties, self-judgment, and outside distractions in favour of the current moment. Religious experiences are similar in that they frequently involve a sense of transcending one's own identity and feeling a connection to something bigger than oneself. A sensation of timelessness and a sense of being in the presence of the divine can result from this condition of self-transcendence.

Robert Wuthnow, a sociologist and author of "After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s," is one researcher who has investigated the confluence of flow and religious experiences. Wuthnow (1998) examines how individuals experience flow in religious practises and rituals, emphasising the immersive and transformative character of these experiences.

Ann Taves, a religious studies scholar, is the author of "Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things." Taves (2009) proposes a cognitive approach to comprehending religious experiences, utilising concepts such as flow and altered states of consciousness to investigate the psychological and neurological dimensions of religious encounters.

The studies mentioned above shed light on the immersive, transcendent, and transformative nature of religious and spiritual encounters by providing valuable insights into the concept of flow experiences in religious contexts. The question, however, is whether the concept of flow is adequate to describe religious experiences of a Pentecostal/charismatic nature.

Musical Experience

Musical experience refers to the multifaceted ways in which individuals engage with and also derive meaning from music (Kerchner & Abril, 2009). It encompasses not only the act of listening to, performing or composing music, but also the emotional, social, and cultural contexts that shape how music is perceived and experienced. Thus, emotional response, cultural context, and social interaction are key components of musical experiences (Sloboda, 1991; DeNora, 2005; Hunter & Schellenberg, 2010; Clayton et al., 2013).

It is a well-noted fact that music often elicits strong emotional responses (Sloboda, 1991). These reactions can vary widely depending on the personal experiences of the listeners, and the context in which the music is heard (Barton, 2018). The meaning derived from musical experience is often largely influenced by cultural background (Clayton et al., 2013), and social experiences of music often occur in communal settings (Blacking, 1995; DeNora, 2005). In whatever

context they occur, musical experiences contribute to personal identity and community connection, and reflects cultural values and social norms.

Scholars have explored musical experiences from various disciplinary perspectives including psychology, cognitive science and ethnomusicology. These studies focus on how people engage with music in real-life scenarios. For example, Alf Gabrielsson (2011) explores over 500 intense musical experiences. Reviewing Gabrielsson's work, Bjerstedt (2013) categorises the experiences into various themes including absorption and intoxication, transcendence, and collective experiences. These themes highlight key points: a) emotional engagement can be so profound as to elicit physical reactions such as tears or shivers; b) listeners sometimes may feel a connection to larger cosmic or emotional truths; and c) many of the narratives emphasise the power of music in group settings, where the shared experiences deepen emotional responses. The therapeutic aspect of music also comes to the fore in Gabrielsson's work highlighting the fact that music often serves as a form of therapy.

Ethnomusicology, the study of music within its cultural context (Merriam, 1960), employs various approaches to understand musical experiences. These methodologies include the anthropological, the musicological and the phenomenological approaches and they emphasize the relationship between music and the societies in which it is created and performed.

The anthropological approach focuses on studying music as a reflection of cultural practices and social life (Merriam, 1964; Nettl & Bohlman, 1991). Ethnomusicologists using this method often engage in fieldwork where they immerse themselves in the community they are studying, living among its

members to observe and participate in musical activities (Barz & Cooley, 2008). This participant-observation allows for a deeper understanding of how music functions within that culture. Cultural contextualization is also employed in which case music is analysed not just as an art form but as a social phenomenon that conveys meanings related to identity, community, and tradition (Turino, 2008). This perspective helps uncover how cultural values and social structures influence musical practices.

In contrast, the musicological approach examines how cultural contexts shape musical forms and structures (Nettl & Bohlman, 1991). Key elements include analysis of musical elements. This involves studying specific musical features such as scale systems, rhythms, and forms to understand their significance within a cultural framework (Anku, 1997; Agawu, 2006). Ethnomusicologists may analyse how these elements relate to historical and social contexts. Bi-musicality, a concept promoted by scholars like Mantle Hood, also encourages researchers to learn the music they study, fostering a more nuanced understanding of its performance practices and cultural meanings (Hood, 1960). This approach aims to reduce ethnocentrism by valuing non-Western musical traditions on their own terms.

On the other hand, phenomenology in ethnomusicology examines the lived experiences of individuals engaged in music-making (Berger, 2019; Friedson, 1996). This approach focuses on embodiment and sensory perception (Downey, 2002; Pelinski, 2005). Researchers explore how physical movements, emotions, and sensory experiences shape musical involvement. This perspective emphasizes the personal and subjective nature of musical experiences (Smith, 2019). It also focuses on the concept of flow and musical involvement

(Witzleben, 2010). Ethnomusicologists investigate how participants experience "flow" during performances, understanding how engagement with music can transcend everyday consciousness.

The current study of MCCM Pentecostals employs the anthropological (i.e., ethnographic fieldwork) and phenomenological approaches to examine the lived musical experiences of members of the MCCM congregation.

Phenomenology and Lived Experience in the context of Christianity

Without relying on preconceived notions or theoretical frameworks, phenomenology endeavours to comprehend human experiences and consciousness (Eberle, 2014; Wilkinson & Hanna, 2016). It emphasises the significance of subjective experiences and individual perspectives in interpreting and comprehending religious phenomena (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Lived religion, however, refers to how individuals actively engage with and practise their religious beliefs in their daily lives, which may differ from formal religious doctrines and institutions (McGuire, 2008).

In the context of Christianity, phenomenology and lived religion have been utilised to investigate the diverse ways in which believers experience and manifest their faith (Ammerman, 2021; Knibbe & Kupari, 2020). Using these methods, scholars have gained insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of Christian religious experiences.

Phenomenology enables researchers to probe into the lived religious experiences of individuals within Christian communities, thereby fostering a deeper comprehension of how believers make sense of their spirituality in various contexts (Knibbe, & Versteeg, 2008; Csordas, 1999). This methodology

allows scholars to transcend merely theoretical analysis and immerse themselves in the actual lived experiences of Christian practitioners. Researchers gain valuable insights into the ways in which religious beliefs are embodied, enacted, and transformed through personal encounters with the divine by scrutinising these experiences.

Thus, phenomenology and lived religion provide essential instruments for comprehending Christianity and these approaches enhance our understanding of how Christian believers actively engage with the complexities of daily life by emphasising the significance of individual experiences and practises.

Of relevance to this discussion may be the question of how the sacred is experienced, a subject which is elucidated in Dadosky's (2001) study of the philosophers Eliade and Lonergan. Using Lonergan's theory of consciousness, Dadosky attempts to bring clarity on Eliade's notion of the sacred. Drawing on Lonergan's four levels of intentional consciousness, namely, experience, understanding, judgment, and decision, Dadosky notes that these correlate respectively with the following questions: "(1) How is the sacred experienced? (2) How do we understand the sacred, insofar as it can be understood (i.e., through sacred symbols)? (3) What does Eliade mean when he states that the sacred is the real? (4) What does it mean to live in the sacred?" (Dadosky, 2001, p. ii).

Without oversimplifying the technical and complex philosophical arguments explicated by Dadosky, it may suffice to state that the foregoing underscores the importance of experience in relation to "religious knowing" (Dadosky, 2001). This corroborates Neumann's (2012) assertion that experience

holds “epistemological value.” Phenomenology, therefore, enables us to probe lived experiences in order to comprehend the sacred through the lens of Christianity.

Lived religion and embodied practices

Christianity emphasises the incorporation of religious beliefs and rituals into daily life, which is exemplified by lived religion and embodied practises. These ideas illustrate how faith is profoundly rooted in the lived experiences and actions of individuals and communities and is not merely a set of abstract beliefs.

In Christianity, lived religion refers to how believers practise and exhibit their faith in their daily lives (McGuire, 2008). It includes the rituals, values, ethics, and beliefs that influence their actions and interactions. As Christians participate in various religious activities, such as attending church services, engaging in prayer and worship, perusing the Bible, and performing acts of charity, they embody their religious beliefs.

Christianity's embodied practises highlight the importance of the physical body as a vehicle for religious expression and experience (McGuire, 2003). This involves engaging in religious rituals with the body and symbolically enacting spiritual truths. For instance, the act of kneeling in prayer, making the sign of the cross, and partaking in sacraments such as baptism and the Eucharist all involve physical gestures with profound spiritual significance.

The lived religion and embodied practises of Christians demonstrate that faith is not solely theoretical but actively expressed through rituals and actions involving the body. In the Christian tradition, these elements are fundamental in moulding the religious identity of individuals and communities.

Lived Religion and Embodied Practices: Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Corporeality

Lived religion and embodied practises are two interrelated concepts that offer valuable insights into the ways in which individuals experience and manifest their faith. Lived religion refers to the dynamic and multifaceted integration of religious beliefs, rituals, and traditions into the daily lives of believers. According to McGuire (2008), lived religion is embedded in the social, cultural, and political realities of everyday experience and is located within the material, sensory, and temporal settings of human life.

In contrast, embodied practises emphasise the tangible and physical aspects of religious expression, highlighting how the body serves as a site for religious experience and performance. According to Csordas (1990), the body is not merely an instrument of religious practises, but also an experiential field that affects and is shaped by the religious meanings it mediates.

In profound ways, lived religion and embodied practises intersect. Religious experiences frequently manifest physically, whether as rapturous rituals, prostrations, or communal celebrations. The embodied nature of religious practises fosters a stronger sense of community and a closer spiritual bond among participants.

Thus, lived religion and embodied practises provide a deeper comprehension of how faith is experienced and lived by individuals within their cultural and social contexts. By examining the intersections of these two concepts, one can obtain a deeper understanding of the holistic and multifaceted nature of religious expression.

Pentecostal experience

Christianity's Pentecostal and Charismatic movement emphasises the direct experience of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (Poewe, 1994; Neumann, 2012). This tradition's adherents frequently pursue spiritual encounters through practises like speaking in tongues, prophesying, and healing, among other manifestations of the Holy Spirit's presence (Anderson, 1991). This movement can be traced back to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, an important event in the history of Pentecostalism, which occurred in the early 20th century (Robeck, 2006).

This tradition's central belief is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is frequently accompanied by glossolalia, or speaking in tongues. Glossolalia, that is, speaking in tongues, is a central aspect of Holy Spirit baptism in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity (Hollenweger, 1997). For Pentecostals and Charismatics, speaking in tongues is a sign of being infused with the Holy Spirit and provides a direct line of communication between the believer and God.

In addition to speaking in tongues, these Christians emphasise the continuation of New Testament-described spiritual gifts. This includes the gifts of prophecy, healing, miracles, and discernment of spirits. It is believed that the Holy Spirit actively operates in the lives of believers, guiding and empowering them for their Christian journey and service. In Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity, the continuation of spiritual gifts reflects the belief in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (Turner, 2015). Robeck (2006) describes the experience of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity as transformative and empowering.

Pentecostal/Charismatic worship services are characterised by emotive intensity and an emphasis on personal encounters with the Holy Spirit (Warrington, 2008; Miller, Sargeant, & Flory, 2013). In Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations, worship is frequently marked by its emotional intensity, with lively music, spontaneous prayers, and an emphasis on personal encounters with God.

During worship, believers are encouraged to be receptive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, allowing for physical responses such as dancing or raising of hands (Butler, 2002).

Among Pentecostal/Charismatic adherents and denominations, the experience of the Holy Spirit can range from ecstatic manifestations to more contemplative expressions of faith (Poloma & Green, 2010). Some may place a greater emphasis on ecstatic experiences and miraculous manifestations, whereas others may prioritise a contemplative, subdued approach to their religion. For this reason, studies of specific ritual contexts and individual lived experiences are necessary, hence, the choice of the MCCM congregation as the focus of the current study.

Prophetism in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity

Prophetism is an important aspect of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity, which is characterised by a belief in the continuance of spiritual gifts, including prophecy, as described in the New Testament (Turner, 2015). In this context, prophecy refers to the supernatural ability to receive and communicate divinely inspired messages from God (Dein & Cook 2015).

Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians frequently emphasise the active presence of the Holy Spirit, who they believe empowers believers to prophesy,

speak in tongues, heal the sick, and perform other miraculous acts (Asamoah, 2013; Mashau, 2013). In the Pentecostal/charismatic context, prophecy is characterised by a receptivity to God's spontaneous and direct revelation (Crane, 1962). Prophets are viewed as conduits through which God reveals His will and purposes for individuals, the church, and even the entire world. It is believed that the prophecies provide guidance, encouragement, correction, and occasionally predictions of future events. These prophecies are frequently shared during worship services, prayer meetings, and other gatherings where Christians seek the Holy Spirit's guidance.

In recent years, the function of prophets in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity has changed and, in some instances, generated controversy (Ramantswana, 2018). The lack of centralised authority and the diversity of beliefs within the movement have led to various prophetic ministry practises and understandings. While some congregations and organisations have well-defined structures for validating and evaluating prophecies, others may have difficulty distinguishing genuine messages from personal opinions or misinterpretations.

Despite these challenges, prophetism in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity continues to be an essential aspect of the movement, with origins in the early 20th century revivals (Synan, 2012). It is believed that the Holy Spirit empowers individuals with the prophetic gift for the edification and guidance of the Church.

Empirical Review

Music in Pentecostal/charismatic worship

As the literature indicates, ethnomusicologists have been expressing renewed interest in sacred and religious music traditions. Indeed, the aim of the

“Religion, Music, and Sound Section” of the Society for Ethnomusicology is to support the study of sacred music including all forms of religious and spiritual music within their socio-cultural contexts (<https://www.ethnomusicology.org>). Again, the recent creation of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) Study Group on “Sacred and Spiritual Sounds and Practices” reflects growth in the scholarly discourse on the aforementioned subject (<http://www.ictmusic.org>). The Christian faith, in particular, Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity thus presents the platform to explore the intersections of religion, spirituality, and music/sound.

The burgeoning and phenomenal growth of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity has brought in its wake a steadily growing interest in its worship and ritual practices. Over the past two decades, scholarship on aspects of P/c worship and ritual has been emerging (e.g. Albrecht, 1999; Lindhardt, 2011). By the turn of the twenty-first century, music scholars had begun making contributions to the study of P/c music making from different locations across the globe (e.g., Butler, 2000, 2002, 2008; Johnson, 2011; Rommen, 2007).

Rommen (2007) explores the role of music in the lives of Full Gospel Christians in Trinidad - how music helps to convince and to actualize belief. Butler (2000) examines how African American and West Indian musical styles are negotiated in a Brooklyn Pentecostal church. Again, Butler (2002) highlights the musical differences between independent and organizational churches in Haitian Pentecostalism. In yet another study of Haitian Pentecostals, Butler (2008) discusses the paradoxical nature of Pentecostal music-making, its potential to be spiritually amalgamative and at the same time socially divisive.

Johnson (2011) examines the uses of praise and worship music in a Los Angeles megachurch.

The studies mentioned above constitute some of the early music scholarship on Pentecostal worship music. However, the first edited volume specifically devoted to the subject of music and worship in contemporary P/c Christianity, *The Spirit of Praise*, appeared in 2015 (Ingalls & Yong, 2015). Employing interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary approaches, this collection of scholarly essays deals with a broad range of issues including the relationship between local and global elements in Pentecostal worship (Evans, 2015), the relationship between music, religious renewal and embodiment (Althouse & Wilkinson, 2015) and the industrialization of worship music (Perkins, 2015).

The volume approaches music as a social practice rather than as a fixed object, and foregrounds “musicking” which is defined as “the broad range of activities that entail the creation, circulation, and acceptance of musical sound” (Ingalls, 2015). Reviewing this edited volume, Allan H. Anderson states that the book “will stand as a benchmark for the study of the role of music and worship in Pentecostalism” (p. 190).

More recently, an issue of the journal *Liturgy* devoted to Pentecostal/Charismatic worship and music as a global phenomenon has been published (Phillips & Riches, 2018). Contributing to this issue, Marti (2018) employs “an ethnographic, sociological approach to the study of liturgical practice” and posits that the simultaneous experience of power and surrender is central to Pentecostal worship (p.21). More importantly, he highlights the key role of music as “a prominent orientation device” in worship – coordinating corporate movement as well as leading people toward “enthusiasm or

contemplation, exuberance or meditation” (p.25). Johnson (2018), on the other hand, conducts a church ethnography highlighting the central role of music in “bridge-building efforts across race, class and nationality” (p. 38). Her study shows that through music-making, opportunities are created for believers of diverse backgrounds and languages to fellowship, thereby weakening “socially constructed walls of race, ethnicity, and tradition” (p.44).

From a theological perspective, Myrick (2018) discusses how musical entrainment affects human bodies, memories and imaginations during worship. He argues that “these effects reveal something profound about the relationships between the Spirit and our bodies that requires theologizing which accounts for musical embodiment and entrainment as a crucial aspect of healthy congregational worship” (p. 29).

It is evident that the scope of study of Pentecostal/Charismatic music and worship is wide and has been approached from different perspectives - ethnomusicology, liturgical studies, church music studies, and so on. However, scholarship on the subject in the African context appears to be scarce.

On the African scene and specifically in the Ghanaian context, attention has been given to music making in Christian worship in general (Agordoh, 1997, 2011), and the rise and boom of gospel music which coincided with the rise of the charismatic movement (Collins, 2004; Atiemo, 2006). One of the factors leading to the rise of charismatic churches according to Gifford (1998) is the mode of worship, in particular, the music. He notes that, gospel music ‘has become a significant expression of Ghanaian culture, not in any fossilised sense but in a contemporary form, in contact with the modern world and the West’ (p.

90). In focusing on gospel music, then, authors appear to be indirectly dealing with music in Pentecostal worship, albeit outside of specific ritual contexts.

Few studies focus on the practice of gospel music within congregations. An example is Carl's (2014) article which examines gospel music as media content and also as congregational performance practice. On a broader level, Carl (2015) looks at the intersection between music, ritual and media in religious experience within the charismatic movement in Ghana.

Despite these strides in scholarship, however, in general, there appears to be a paucity of studies on Pentecostal music making in the Ghanaian context, for as Kalu (2010) pointed out, studies on African Pentecostalism have focused on its growth through space rather than through sound.

Prophetism in Ghanaian Christianity

Prophetism in African Christianity dates back to the early twentieth century when independent itinerant charismatic prophets led revivals which resulted in massive conversions of people from African traditional religion to Christianity (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015). The work of these prophets later partly resulted in the formation of the African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs). Baeta's seminal work, *Prophetism in Ghana*, shows how some of the AICs or spiritual churches emerged and operated with emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit.

It has been noted that these churches "emphasized the charismatic triad of prayer, prophecy, and healing" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015, p. 4) and these activities revolved around the charisma or gift of the leader/prophet. The AICs were thus termed prophet-healing movements due to "the central role played by

charismatic personalities and their ministries of healing within the AICs” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015, p. 5).

Although the AICs are now playing a peripheral role in Ghanaian Christianity, the prophetic strain has lingered through the various phases of renewal in Ghanaian Christianity. Six phases of Christian prophetism have been identified (Aryeh, 2019). The first phase is linked to the emergence of the AICs, and the second phase is associated with classical Pentecostalism through the work of Apostle Peter Anim, James McKeown, and others such as Prophet Gilbert Ablorh Lawson of the Divine Healer’s Church and Prophet John Mensah of the Church of Christ (Spiritual Movement). The third phase occurred in Christian Fellowships in tertiary institutions. The fourth phase was seen in the Pentecostalist Prayer Camps/Centres of the Church of Pentecost. The fifth phase emerged in the 1990s as part of “neo-pentecostalism” or charismatic movement and includes Prophet Bernard Opoku Nsiah, Elisha Salifu Amoako, Isaac Owusu Bempah and others. The sixth phase is described as “neo-prophetism.”

By virtue of the fact that the church in this current study, MCCM, was founded in the early 1980s, and also has multiple “prophets” within the same congregation who do not employ aids to prayer, its placement within the established phases is problematic. At best, it may fall within the third and fourth phases described earlier.

Music and prophetism

In Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity, music and prophetism play significant roles, nurturing a profound connection between believers and the divine. In P/c worship services, music frequently functions as a potent instrument for invoking the Holy Spirit's presence and creating an atmosphere

of spiritual intensity (Albrecht, 1999; Riches, 2010; Miller & Strongman 2002). By singing, clapping, and swaying with exuberance, believers demonstrate their devotion and openness to receive divine messages.

In contrast, prophetism is the practise of receiving and delivering messages from God (Lum, 2018). In Pentecostal circles, it is believed that prophets possess the prophetic gift, which enables them to receive direct revelations from the Holy Spirit. These prophetic messages are frequently interpreted as divine guidance and can incorporate personal, communal, and even global issues (Muindi, 2012; Lum, 2018).

In P/c Christianity, the connection between music and prophetism can be grasped through the concept of "prophetic worship" (Perez, 2021) Prophetic worship is a form of musical expression in which spontaneous melodies and lyrics are believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, thereby serving as a direct conduit for divine messages to the congregation. In these instances, music becomes a conduit for prophetic utterances, nurturing a sense of spiritual transformation and bringing believers closer to God. The current study does not deal with 'prophetic worship' because this phenomenon was not observed in the ritual context of MCCM.

It is apparent, however, that music and prophetism are intertwined aspects of Pentecostal Christianity that work together to create a worship experience that is vibrant and spiritually energised. Prophetism enables believers to receive divine guidance and messages from God, while music functions as a medium to invoke the Holy Spirit's presence. The purpose of this study is to examine how these intertwined aspects of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity play out in a specific ritual context.

Chapter Summary

The theory of embodiment is an approach used to understand religious experiences which are thought to be based fundamentally on the materiality of human existence. The Pentecostal/charismatic understanding of embodiment, however, needs to be examined to facilitate the comprehension of P/c experiences. Related to embodiment are the concepts of musical entrainment, and flow – a concept which is questioned in terms of its relevance in explaining religious experiences of a Pentecostal nature. Phenomenology enables a researcher to probe into individual lived experiences. An examination of the connection between lived experiences and embodied practices provides an understanding of the multifaceted nature of religious expressions.

Experience and prophetism are key aspects of Pentecostalism. Despite the challenges of validating prophecy, prophetism remains an essential aspect of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity. A review of literature on music in P/cs reveals a geographical gap which has led one scholar to suggest that studies on African Pentecostalism have focused on its growth through space rather than through sound. Although music and prophetism are intertwined aspects of Pentecostalism, and there is growing literature on prophetism, there appears to be a lack of literature on the combined subject of music and prophetism, making the current study exploratory in nature. The methods employed in the study will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine musical experience and prophetism in the context of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity in Ghana. The research methods are the focus of this chapter and it entails the research design, a discussion of the research approach, a description of the social group being studied, fieldwork, reflexivity and positionality, data collection procedures and the processes of data analysis and interpretation.

Research Design

This research project is framed in the interpretivist theoretical paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which views our perception of reality as socially constructed. Thus, the mode of inquiry is qualitative. As a church ethnography, it explores the musical behaviour of a Pentecostal/charismatic religious community, and their collective and individual lived musical experiences. It is an ethnomusicological study.

The ethnographic approach

Ethnography is one of the approaches to qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and is often used in congregations (Hall, 2013). Titon's (2021) paper discusses the appropriateness of ethnography as an approach in the study of congregational music. Highlighted below are four aspects of ethnography.

First of all, ethnography refers to “a systematic description of the culture or some aspect of the culture, of a social group”, an example of such a social group being a religious congregation (Titon, 2021, p. 64). As to what ethnographers do, they “observe behaviour and document it” after which they

try to understand it from the native point of view (Titon, 2021, p. 65). In choosing to study a religious congregation, therefore, I sought to observe and document the musical behaviour of the group, and to understand what they do from their perspective.

Secondly, “ethnography is produced by field research or fieldwork” (Titon, 2021, p. 64). Fieldwork requires spending time with the group under study, and in this regard, I spent a considerable amount of time in the field in order to participate and observe the ritual life of the religious group.

Thirdly, because of the fact that ethnographers seek to understand the culture as members of the social group understand it, the best direct way to elicit such information is through interviewing. In that regard, it is necessary to elicit the information from leaders of the social group, and those who have been part of the group for a relatively long time since they are the best source for the most reliable information about meaning (Titon, 2021). In my study, therefore, I engaged the leadership of the religious group in order to ascertain the meanings they ascribe to their actions and activities.

Lastly, as Titon (2021) explains, “ethnographic approaches to ‘how they feel when they’re doing it’ are informed by phenomenology, a line of inquiry directed to experience that is present to consciousness” (p. 70). In this inquiry, “the subject examines his or her own experience” and the ethnographer “reports from a third-person viewpoint” (Titon, 2021, p. 70). In my study, I focus on the experiential dimension of worship through the collective and individual lived experiences of members of the religious group, using the terms experience and phenomenology synonymously.

Thus, a study of the musical behaviour of a congregation can be undertaken using the ethnographic approach with the experiential dimensions of the study explored phenomenologically. An example of such a study is Butler's (2000) research on musical style and experience in a Brooklyn Pentecostal Church.

Other studies employing the ethnographic approach include Rommen's (2007) book on the role of music in the lives of Full Gospel Christians in Trinidad, Butler's (2019) *Island Gospel* which looks at music and identity among Pentecostals in Jamaica and the Jamaican diaspora, and Johnson's (2011) study of worship music in a Los Angeles megachurch.

The Social Group under Study

The religious community under study is the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry (MCCM), a Pentecostal/charismatic church located in Accra. The ministry, founded by Ghanaians, is a member of the GPCC and has over 50 branches across the nation. The headquarters, which is the focus of this study, has an average of 600 worshippers on Sundays in an auditorium that seats over a thousand congregants on special occasions.

There are three main music groups with different leaders. Altogether, the Senior and Youth Choirs have over 150 singers with a team of about ten bandsmen/musicians. The Worship Team is made up of a few members of the two main choirs and some members of the congregation. The ministry also has a structured prophetic ministry with a group that is made up of over twenty members who have varying degrees of spiritual gifts including the gift of prophecy.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted through participant-observation, and semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Participant observation was done with the aid of an observation guide. The guide was employed in the observation of service structure, musical practice and behaviour of the congregation, as well as prophetic activity. An interview guide was used for the semi-structured interviews with designated sections for church leaders, music leaders, and ‘prophets’/vessels.

The ethnographic fieldwork was carried out from March, 2019 to March, 2020 (Pre-COVID), and from September, 2020 to June, 2021 (COVID period). The gap in the data collection period was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Formal entry into the field was established through the submission of a letter of introduction from the Department of Music and Dance, UCC to the leadership of MCCM, and access was gained by obtaining a signed letter of consent from the Head Pastor enabling me to carry out my research in the church. Thereafter, notice of the research was carried in church announcements for voluntary participation of members.

The purposive sampling procedure was employed. In this procedure, “the choice of respondents is guided by the judgement of the investigator” (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 177). For this project, therefore, key informants and participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the church’s musical practice, and/or their personal experiences of music and/or prophetism. Therefore, pastors, church leaders, “prophets,” music and worship leaders, musicians, singers, and members of the congregation were included in the study.

I attended fifty-seven (57) services (Pre-COVID), and thirty-two (32) services (COVID Period), to observe, among other things, the collective musical experiences and prophetic activity. I also held nine semi-structured interviews with church leaders, vessels, and those involved in the music ministry, as well as other conversations which resulted in 13 shared testimonies. In addition, I collected church transcripts of prophecies and revelations spanning December, 2015 to April, 2019. Altogether, over 30 prophecies and revelations related to music were gathered.

Ethical Consideration

The participants were assured of anonymity by the use of pseudonyms and they duly signed the informed consent form in compliance with the ethical requirements of the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast.

Reflexivity and Positionality

This research topic on music and prophetism was born out of a desire to understand the purpose of sacred music in the Christian context. As the daughter of a Methodist minister raised in the Methodist Church, my musical foundations are in the Wesleyan tradition. While in secondary school at a tender age, I experienced spiritual rebirth at a Scripture Union event and subsequently received what I now know as the baptism of the Holy Spirit without any human mediation. While pursuing studies in Music at the National Academy of Music/University College of Education from 1989, I was exposed to different Christian denominations including the Pentecostal/charismatic churches. My professional career as a musician in primarily church circles over the last three decades has shaped my perspectives on music-making in the context of Christianity.

However, having worshipped and served as the Choir Director of MCCM since 2000, I have come to experience Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity firsthand, and as such consider myself an insider when it comes to this study. The scope of the study however goes beyond my area of specialization since I am neither a worship leader nor a ‘prophet’ (vessel) and the participants of the study own their personal lived experiences. In that sense, I am an outsider, but more so by virtue of my investigative role as a researcher.

In my analysis, I have drawn on my experience both as a musician and a Christian of Pentecostal inclination in addition to the literature in order to explicate the assertions of the participants, since some basic understanding of what it means to be Pentecostal is necessary to make sense of religious experiences in that context. An insider positionality is therefore helpful in this regard. Thus, for this study, the concept of insider-outsiderness is viewed as a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Holmes, 2020).

There are advantages of insider research. Hanson (2013) states that, “knowledge of the organization enables richer data to be obtained” and that it is “easier to gain access to research respondents and achieve deeper levels of trust” (p 391). However, to “reduce the potential concerns associated with insider membership,” Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest “disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection on the subjective research process, with a close awareness of one’s own personal biases and perspectives” (p. 59). Disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection is therefore employed to ensure neutrality of the researcher.

From March, 2019 to March, 2020, I engaged in the observation of activities related to music and prophetism in the services I attended. During this

period of fieldwork, I oscillated between two roles: (1) as an active participant/insider and (2) as a researcher/outsider. Negotiating these two positions was not that easy. There were times when I was completely immersed in the worship activities that jotting down notes or recording became difficult. When I performed my duty of directing the MCCM choir, I was unable to observe the reactions of the congregation. It was only after the ministration that I jotted down any occurrences or observations made. However, my study was possible due to the presence of other music groups who also ministered during services and the availability of church documents.

Data Collection Procedures

In gathering the data, I was selective. I focused on collecting data on the collective musical experience and its relation to prophetism as the topic states. This is because, not all prophecies and revelations that were given during the period of fieldwork had to do with music.

Field notes/audio recordings/transcripts

Events were captured as they occurred in the services. The field notes consist of records of the sequence of events leading to or after a revelation or prophecy, ministration by the various music groups, summaries of revelations/prophecies, as well as personal comments. Audio recordings were made of revelations/sections of prophecies. Since prophecies/revelations were spoken largely in the Ga language and interpreted/translated into Twi and English, the English translation was used. The recorded revelations were transcribed. Again, because the move of the Spirit is unpredictable, it was impossible to plan ahead. Usually, when a vessel approached the Head Pastor for 'vetting' before a revelation was made public, or when a vessel rose to their

feet and begun to speak in tongues, that was my cue to record. In this way, I captured only the portions of services that were relevant to my study. I also had access to the church's documentation of prophecies and revelations. Transcripts of the prophecies/revelations are in English, and contain the dates and names of the prophets/vessels used.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of the data was thematic. Document analysis was used as a means of triangulation. It involved the selection of the relevant portions relating to the research topic, and the content of the excerpts were then analysed thematically. The data were then interpreted in light of the theory of embodiment and Pentecostal spirituality.

Chapter Summary

As one of the approaches to qualitative research, ethnography has often been employed in the study of congregational music, and it is therefore suitable for the examination of the musical behaviour of MCCM, which is the religious group under study. Fieldwork for the study was conducted through participant observation and interviews. Church documents were also collected. Through a section of reflexivity, the position of the researcher is made evident. The period of the fieldwork coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, and resulted in a limited number of participants in the study. However, the extensive data collected through observation and documents facilitated the overall analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTUAL/HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

Since the present study is on musical experience in a Pentecostal/Charismatic religious setting, it is important to begin the discussion in this segment with a brief historical overview of Pentecostalism, and look at key studies on African Christianity and Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana as a way of contextualization. In addition, an overview of music and worship is given with highlights on music in Ghanaian Christianity.

Pentecostalism and African Christianity

The history of Pentecostalism has been documented by theologians, anthropologists, historians of religion, and other scholars. According to Robbins (2004), the roots of Pentecostalism can be traced to the “Protestant evangelical tradition that grew out of the eighteenth-century, Anglo-American revival movement known as the Great Awakening” (p.119). Marked by its emphasis on conversion, Evangelical Christianity includes denominations like Methodists and Baptists. As the most important evangelical denomination during the nineteenth century, Methodism distinguished itself from the others by its doctrine of “sanctification”. Later in the second half of the nineteenth century, there arose a largely Methodist Holiness movement that centered on groups that experimented with a wide range of interpretations on the nature and number of experiential processes that affected a person’s salvation. These Holiness efforts gave birth to Pentecostalism.

Charles Fox Parham is credited with Pentecostalism's primary innovation of seeing the "speaking in tongues as the necessary 'initial physical evidence' of Spirit baptism" (Robbins, 2004, p.120). Following Parham's teaching, William Seymour, an African American preacher led the Azusa street revival which lasted from 1906 to 1909 and it is this revival that is "widely recognized as the birth of Pentecostalism" (Robbins, 2004, p.120). Although this origin of Pentecostalism is a subject of debate among scholars, Pentecostalism has spread throughout the world and has been successful as a globalizing movement. An extensive discussion on the debate and on local and global Pentecostalism and charismatic movements is however beyond the scope of this study (see for example: Anderson, 2005; Irvin, 2005; Comaroff, 2012; Ng'etich, 2023). A brief overview is therefore given below.

Robbins (2004) defines Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity (P/c) as "the form of Christianity in which believers receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit" (p.117). Reviewing the anthropological literature, he observes a paradoxical picture of the cultural dynamics accompanying the spread of P/cs, and argues that P/cs have certain features that enable it not only to replicate itself in canonical form wherever it spreads, but also to adapt itself to the cultures into which it is introduced.

Whilst Robbins focuses mainly on issues bordering on the globalization of P/cs, Meyer (2004) looks at Christianity in general as it pertains to Africa over a period of twenty-five years. The literature on Christianity in Africa over the period highlights the shift from AICs (African Independent Churches) to PCCs (Pentecostal Charismatic Churches) as new foci of empirical study, and the "conceptual transformations to which it gave rise" from an anthropological

perspective (Meyer, 2004, p.448). Meyer identifies three discursive frames – Christianity and “traditional religion,” Africa and “the wider world,” religion and politics - which have organized research on AICs and PCCs over the period. She argues that the adjectives “African” and “independent” once employed “as markers of authentic, indigenous interpretations of Christianity” have proven “to be increasingly problematic to capture the rise, spread, and phenomenal appeal of PCCs in Africa” (Meyer, 2004, p.448). Meyer critically reviews discussions about Africanization, globalization and modernity, and the role of religion in the public sphere in postcolonial African societies.

The public role of African Christianity is explored by Gifford (1998) with case studies of particular African nations, namely, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia and Cameroon. In this study of Christianity in post-independent Africa, Gifford deals with how churches are responding to political developments and how they are helping to shape these developments. From historic mission churches to the neo-pentecostal/charismatic movement, he discusses in detail the different roles each of these churches have played in the four countries. He highlights the fact that Christianity in Africa is not ‘a single easily identifiable entity,’ but rather that there is ‘a wide range of Christianities, functioning differently’ (Gifford, 1998, p. 325). He describes the drift from the mainline historic churches to Pentecostal churches as highlighting “the division between ‘elite’ and ‘popular’ Christianity” (p. 329).

Gifford distinguishes three areas in which African churches could contribute to strengthening civil society, namely, the political, the economic, and the cultural. He argues that politically, there appears not to be much difference between how leadership is exercised in churches and in national life. In short,

there is generally a lack of transparency and accountability. He notes that Africa's economic plight and the life of the churches are closely linked, the churches providing employment for those fleeing the harsh economic conditions. It appears though, in a sense that the churches are helping to "foster middle-class virtues and skills" which in other cultures have helped create modern economies (p.345). Culturally, Gifford speaks of the 'born-again churches' as doing conflicting things at the same time, for example, preserving traditional thoughts and spiritual realities basically to demonise them and thereby denigrating the African culture.

Pentecostalism, Gifford (1998) notes, has also brought about several cultural shifts, such as the development of individualism as a result of their emphasis on personal decision which results in the breaking down of the extended family system, the alteration of the position of women, and the opening up of new areas of cultural expression. He concludes that with the advent of Africa's "catastrophic decline" and the limited chances of its transformation through personal effort, there is the need for a "radical restructuring" of African socio-political systems, and that it is less likely that churches will make significant contribution to the restructuring process (p. 348).

The relevance of Gifford's (1998) study lies in the fact that it gives a historical overview of the activities of the "different Christianities" that are present in the African countries used as case studies within the context of political developments that have arisen after their independence, and it also provides a background to understanding the nature and dynamics of African Christianity. It has been argued, however, contrary to what Gifford suggests, that Pentecostalism in Ghana, for example, has little connection with either political

or economic oppression, but rather that it is more “a case of religious pragmatism”, with adherents searching for answers to life issues from the supernatural realm in ways that traditional religion and “orthodox” or mainline Christianity had proven inadequate (Larbi, 2001, p. 436).

In the Nigerian context, Marshall-Fratani (1998) points out that pentecostalism and some other religious movements, “present a challenge to the state’s monopoly over the public sphere and pose one of the greatest threats ever to its goal of national unity and ideologies of development.” She argues that:

pentecostalism is attempting to colonise the national public space and reconceptualise the structure and normative basis of the nation, and is doing this largely not through the institutionalisation of churches, but through the production and dissemination of a multitude of discourses via the media; (Marshall-Fratani, 1998, p.282).

According to Hackett (1998), modern media technologies are not only tools for disseminating the Word, but they are tools of expansion reflecting global aspirations and are used as part of efforts to Christianize popular culture (p. 258). A decade later, Meyer (2008) confirms this viewpoint. Her study “focuses on the Christian popular culture that has emerged in Ghana in the aftermath of the democratization, enabling the unprecedented public presence of Christianity, in particular Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, in the public sphere” (p. 82). She alludes to the work of individual cultural entrepreneurs in the areas of popular painting, print, music and video-film as contributing to the rise of this popular Christian culture. While Marshall-Fratani in 1998 noted that pentecostalism was “attempting to colonise the national public space” (p.282),

Meyer in 2008 states emphatically that the “Christian popular culture has quite successfully colonized public space” (p. 84). According to De Witte (2003), the extensive use of the mass media by the churches has “generated a religious, charismatic-Pentecostally oriented public sphere” (p. 177).

In works that deal particularly with Pentecostalism in Ghana (see, for example, Larbi, 2001; Gifford, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2000; 2005; 2013), different aspects of the movement are highlighted. In *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, the origins, development, and impact of Ghanaian Pentecostalism, and more importantly, the movement’s concept of salvation are the focus (Larbi, 2001). Among other things, Larbi delineates the strands of Pentecostal renewal in Ghana, traces the historical development of the administrative structures of the Pentecostals, and discusses the contributions of key figures in Ghanaian Pentecostalism.

Gifford’s (2004) *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* focuses on six churches in Accra and aims at establishing the religious vision of the new Christianity and contributing to the debate on the socio-political role of this Christianity. This book offers insights into the very nature of the charismatic movement and brings to attention the diversity of orientations within the grouping. The exposé on the individual churches under study appears to be a fair reflection of the kinds of approaches used in these new churches.

In *African Charismatics*, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) looks at indigenous Ghanaian Pentecostal movements, their collective history, as well as their religious and theological orientation. He describes his work as “a study of ‘tendencies and emphases’ rather than of particular churches and personalities”

(p. 3). Adopting an intercultural approach to Pentecostalism, he strings together “the distinctive spirituality that defines Ghanaian Pentecostalism as one member of a global family” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 235) which are (1) affirmation of God’s existence and presence, (2) authentication of God’s power or presence in ‘signs and wonders,’ especially healing, (3) “the restoration of spiritual gifts not only in an ontological sense, but also as a functional reality” (p. 237), and (4) the affirmation of worship as an authentic encounter with God (p.240). Of particular relevance are the views of indigenous Ghanaian Pentecostal worship expressed in Asamoah-Gyadu’s work.

It is important to note that, as predecessors to the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, one of the main contributions made by the AICs (Spiritual Churches, or *Sunsum soré*, as they are variously known) to Christianity in Ghana is the “normalisation of charismatic gifts in Christian expression” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 240). AICs and Pentecostal churches were earlier seen as belonging to the same church type because of their shared emphasis on pneumatic elements of the Bible. However, a distinction has been made due to sharp differences in theology and ethos (Larbi, 2001, pp.68-69).

That Africans, historically, have opted for pneumatic forms in their choices of expressions of the Christian faith, is demonstrated in Asamoah-Gyadu’s *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity* (2013). Using data drawn mainly from Ghana, an attempt is made at interpreting pneumatic Christianity in Africa, its nature, spirituality, and theology. Asamoah-Gyadu posits that Ghanaian Pentecostalism is not ‘imported’ but ‘homegrown’, (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. xvii). He notes that:

Precisely because of these pneumatic movements, the face of Christianity in Africa has changed perpetually. Some of the movements will survive, others will dwindle, but on the whole these ministries appear to me to be the future of Christianity on the continent (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. 180)

He concludes by providing indicators one needs to look for to ascertain that the Spirit of God is really on the move, and these signs he labels “benchmarks of Pentecost”. This is a set of five standards created to serve as criteria for identifying the genuine move of the Holy Spirit. The five benchmarks are: (1) transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ, (2) desire for prayer and renewal, (3) empowerment for active witness, (4) manifestations of the spirit, and (5) pursuit of eternal values.

The aim of the foregoing discussion has been to provide a background to our study by highlighting key literature that illuminates the subject of African Christianity in general and Pentecostal Christianity in particular in the Ghanaian context.

Pentecostalism in Ghana: A brief history

The globalization of Pentecostalism has become the subject of several academic treatises. As a form of Christianity, Pentecostalism, according to Anderson (2004), can be found “in almost every country on earth” (p. 449). He notes that:

In spite of the common notion that Pentecostalism is a North American form of Christianity, the Pentecostal/charismatics’ today are predominantly Africans, Latin Americans and Asians. Their Christianity is not North American despite any links they

might have with that continent through the process of globalization. The Third World continents are where the greatest expansion of Pentecostalism has occurred, although this does not preclude its obvious significance in North America and parts of Europe. (Anderson, 2004, p. 439).

In sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity which was introduced by Western missionaries around the fifteenth century has undergone renewals. In the region, “forces of religious modernisation and globalization” have contributed to the changing face of Christianity (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, p.2). Lamin Sanneh writes that by the end of the nineteenth century the question that bugged the minds of those interested or concerned with Christianity in West Africa was not whether the religion would survive but rather the form in which it would emerge. Great stirrings, he adds, were taking place in the regions of the greatest population density such as Yorubaland and the Niger (Sanneh, as cited in Larbi, 2001).

These “great stirrings” or “renewal movements” in the Ghanaian context, as Larbi (2001) points out, did indeed colour the face of Christianity and ushered in new Christian spirituality. These renewal movements, according to Larbi, may be placed within two main periods – 1900 to 1970, and 1970 to 1990. The two periods gave birth to six major Christian renewal movements which are enumerated by Larbi as follows:

The first of these belong to the Spiritual church movement. The churches here are also known as the Prophet-healing churches, or the Spiritual churches. The second movement to emerge may be classified as Mainline or evangelical Pentecostal movement. The

ripples of the evangelistic activities of the evangelical Pentecostal movement produced or at least aided in producing four other renewal movements referred to as: the Charismatic Movement within the mainline churches, Para-church Movement, the neo-Pentecostal movement (popularly called the charismatic movement in Ghana), and the Prophet/Healer-centred Pentecostalist Prayer camps (Larbi, 2001, p. 57).

The emergence of the Spiritual Churches, or *Sunsum soré* (as they are called in the vernacular) was heralded by activities of some prophetic figures – Prophets Wade Harris, John Swatson, and Sampson Oppong. The origins of these Spiritual/Prophet-healing/Aladura churches can be traced to the year in which Harris’ evangelistic activities reached the Western Province of Ghana, that is, in 1914. Harris toured the coastal towns of West Africa and his ministry was characterized by dramatic conversions, deliverance, healing, prophecy and other manifestations of divine power. The churches which emerged from these prophetic campaigns were designated AICs (African Initiated Churches/ African Independent Churches/ African instituted Churches/ African Indigenous Churches) primarily because they were in direct contrast to the mainline churches of Western provenance. Because of their shared emphasis on the pneumatic elements of the Bible, Spiritual Churches and Pentecostal churches were earlier seen as belonging to the same church type. In Ghana, the term “spiritual churches” originally included classical Pentecostals. However, a distinction has been made due to sharp differences in theology and ethos (Larbi, 2001).

The *Sunsum soré* emerged on the Ghanaian religious scene about a century ago. Although presently these churches are on the decline, their contribution to Ghanaian Christianity and spirituality cannot be overlooked. Two former traditional priests who were converted through the Harris campaign- Prophetess Grace Tani and Prophet John Nackabah- inspired the formation of the Twelve Apostles church, one of the leading independent churches of the *Sunsum soré* category. The key large *Sunsum soré* such as the Musama Disco Christo Church, Nkansah's African Faith Tabernacle and the Twelve Apostles Church are still quite visible in the country. The development of these churches revolves around the personality of the founders, not unlike those of the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches who call themselves Prophets/Prophetesses or Seers (*Adiyifo* in the local parlance). In most cases, these churches are called by the names of their founders reflecting an "inseparability between founders and the churches they lead" with the leaders seeing themselves as the sole conduit for the Holy Spirit (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, p. 68).

As has been noted, "the *Sunsum soré* attempts at synthesising 'biblical belief, Christian liturgical forms and African religious and ritual concepts' often blurred the dividing lines between Christian ritual and traditional divination methods" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 82). *Sunsum soré* employ aids to prayer such as holy water, oil, spiritual soap, etc., which are often blessed by the founder and sold to members (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 84). Usually, on the premises of *Sunsum soré*, there are sacred places such as mausoleums where founders are buried (for example, at Mozano, the Holy City of the Musama Disco Christo Church at Gomoa Ehyiamu in the Central Region), and sacred

spaces such as the Nackabah ‘garden’ of the Twelve Apostles’ Church. Members of sunsum soré have a strong attachment to the person of the leader, to the holy and sacred places associated with the churches, and to the ‘cult of angels’ leading to what has been described as a “strong mediatory form of ministry” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, p.70).

Reasons for the current peripheral role of these churches in Ghanaian Christianity include religious, theological, as well as other factors such as concentration of power in the personality of an individual, centring activities around the gifts of the leader/founder, lack of continuity of ministry (i.e. in the absence of or upon the demise of the leader/founder), and lack of financial accountability (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). It has been suggested that religious developments that have affected the strength of Sunsum soré are the rise of renewal prayer groups within mainline historic churches or traditional mission churches, and the presence of the Church of Pentecost (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005).

As Wyllie (1974) notes, the independent Pentecostalist movement in Ghana was “profoundly influenced by the work of two highly dedicated and forceful men, Peter Anim and James McKeown”. He explains that:

For a short period in the late 1930’s these men worked together in an attempt to establish the British-based Apostolic Church in the Southern part of Ghana, but parted company after a dispute over the question of faith healing and the use of medicine. In the years following this break, both Anim and McKeown went on to develop their own separate organizations despite many obstacles and difficulties (Wyllie, 1974, p. 109).

The two churches created by Anim and McKeown, - the Christ Apostolic Church and the Church of Pentecost (CoP) – are independent African bodies (Wyllie, 1974, p. 109). These churches together with the Apostolic Church and the Assemblies of God constitute the “established Pentecostals” (Gifford, 2004, p. 20). With regard to the Church of Pentecost, it has been noted that although it identifies with the classical Pentecostal tradition, and in spite of the fact that it was founded through the missionary activities of the Rev. James McKeown, it has acquired “a unique indigenous character marking it out as different in outlook from, say, the Assemblies of God” whose American imprint after more than sixty years of existence in Ghana is still quite obvious (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 23).

In America, the charismatic movement within the mainline churches began within the Protestant church in 1960 and in the Roman Catholic Church in 1966. However, in Ghana, the phenomenon did not become nationwide until the beginning of the 1970’s. It has been suggested that it was through the work of para-church organizations such as the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International and the Women Aglow International that the Pentecostal spirituality entered the mainline churches ((Larbi, 2001).

While the mainline churches and the classical Pentecostals remain significant bodies, they have been “eclipsed by [...] the charismatic sector” (Gifford, 2004, p.23). This sector comprises new independent churches or ministries that began to spring up from the late 1970’s onwards in Ghana. The neo-Pentecostal churches or charismatic churches have continued to flourish in the last four decades drawing members from established churches such as the mainline historic churches and AICs.

While the number of churches in this group is great with different theological orientations and perspectives, there are some of them who in Ghanaian circles are representative of the new phenomenon. These are some of the oldest of the charismatic churches whose leaders and/or founders are well-known or have acquired a certain status in Ghanaian society. Key among these are the Action Chapel International led by Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, the International Central Gospel Church founded by Pastor Mensa Otabil, Dag Heward-Mills' Lighthouse Chapel International, Charles Agyin Asare's Perez Chapel (formerly Word Miracle Church International), and Elisha Salifu Amoako's Alive Chapel International. Each of these churches lays emphasis on different aspects of Pentecostal theology and their leaders have a media presence which extends their following beyond their church buildings.

The charismatic sector appealed in its early days to the youth but over time, the youth have matured or 'aged'. This has resulted partly to the transformation of the nature of services, messages, and other characteristics of the early charismatic days.

Music in Ghanaian Christianity

It is common knowledge that "music has always played an important role in relation to religion and its practices" (Clark, 2006, p. 475). In African traditional religion, for example, music features prominently in rituals and spirit possession is made possible through music. In Christianity, the psalms and hymns of the biblical times, the Gregorian chant of the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant hymns and chorales are all musical expressions of worship and devotion. The Wesleyans, for example, note in their hymn-book that Methodism was born in song. Pentecostalism has also brought in its wake musical forms that

are expressive and emotive, and one cannot speak of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity without reference to its music. I present here an overview of music in the worship of the various Christian denominations in Ghana.

Music in the historic mission churches

The introduction of Euro-American music into the Ghanaian society was done primarily through the joint efforts of the European traders, missionaries as well as the colonial agents. The history of the musical traditions of the historic mission churches is closely linked with the history of Christian missions and also the activities of European traders in Ghana (Darkwa, 1974). The missionary work of the Basel, Wesleyan, Bremen, Roman Catholic, and Anglican missions from the beginning of the nineteenth-century onwards resulted in the establishment of several churches and schools which became the channels for the “musical re-orientation” of the Africans.

The Basel mission worked from the point of view that at all cost the African had to hear the Gospel, read the Bible, worship and be taught in his own tongue and so they worked on mastering the Twi and Ga languages. This resulted in the production of Bibles, catechisms, service books as well as school textbooks in the vernacular. Indeed, this emphasis on vernacular language has remained a marked feature of the work of the Basel Mission (Smith, 1966). This work made it possible for the first sermon to be preached in Twi.

The first Twi hymn was sung in the middle of 1884. From that time, the hymns sung in the local Basel Mission churches were mainly translations of German hymns. The edition of the tunes to the Twi and Ga hymnbook, which was used in the 1970s by the Presbyterian Church (the offspring of the Basel Mission) contained mostly German and English tunes some of which were

composed by G.F. Handel, F. Mendelssohn, J. Haydn, M. Luther, etc (Darkwa, 1974). Unlike the Basel Mission, the Wesleyans who worked mainly on the coast were not so keen on the reduction of African languages into writing mainly because along the coast the demand for learning English was great and the mission also had capable African ministers right from the beginning. However, upon pressure from some European missionaries and the home board in London, vernacular work began.

In 1843, a missionary compiled a “brief nucleus of a Fante Grammar” (Debrunner, 1967, p. 142). Eventually, a committee that was set up to prepare a Fante word list had to draw heavily on the resources of Christaller’s dictionary and this work made it possible for the complete Bible in Fante to be published at the time it was (Bartels, 1965). Services in the Methodist Church, however, were held mainly in English; hymns were also sung in English, and the church in general was characterised by its “Englishness.” With time, members of the congregation began to improvise spontaneously Christian songs to African tunes, a form known as Fante lyrics. Fifteen of these songs were included in the first vernacular church hymn book published by the Basel Mission (Debrunner, 1967). There were 236 Akuapem hymns and 15 Fante lyrics (Abibindwom) in Fante (Darkwa, 1974).

The Bremen mission society was active among the Ewe and also undertook the task of providing their religious constituency with the Bible in their mother tongue. The result of their efforts was a fully translated Ewe Bible that came to replace the missionaries when they had to leave the field because of the First World War in 1914 (Meyer, 1995). For several years the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the church that emerged from the missionary work of the

Bremen society, used the revised hymn-book of 1925. Currently, the church uses a newly-revised version *Nyanyui Hame Hadzigbalē* which came out in 2004 (Agordoh, 2011).

By the mid - 1960s, the need for African theologians who would pioneer at the time a re-interpretation of Christian theology to suit the African had become apparent, and one of the suggested areas was in the realm of the church's worship (Smith, 1966). By the late 1960s, however, Vatican II's cultural policy had ignited liturgical revival along with new musical traditions as exemplified in the Congolese "Zaire Rite" and the *Missa Luba*, both of which show-cased the vernacularization of the mass (Kalu, 2010). Again, the "singing band" movement which began through Sunday Schools and "Bands of Hope" was adopted by other churches with time. These bands sang "Christian songs in the vernacular to new tunes which appealed to the African sense of music" (Debrunner, 1967, p. 351). The process of indigenisation of the historic mission churches has thus been ongoing since the middle of the twentieth century.

It is clear from the foregoing that in the early years of the historic mission churches, they reflected "the characteristics of the European churches from which the missionaries came" and worship was to a large extent " austere and unemotional with little congregational participation apart from the hymn-singing" (Smith, 1966, p. 272). Generally, the church frowned on indigenous forms of expression in worship and the use of African dress in the pulpit. Choirs were robed in cassocks, surplices and mortar boards (Smith, 1966). The historic mission churches in the twenty-first century have not shed off their 'European traits', but with time and the advent of the AICs and the

Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, which competed with them for membership, they have introduced liturgical modifications.

Music in African Independent/Indigenous Churches (AICs)

The African independent churches, generally referred to as “spiritual churches” include movements such as the Church of the Twelve Apostles and the Musama Disco Christo Church. Initially, these churches stood in marked contrast to the major Christian missionary denominations because of their emphasis on “spiritualism, healing, and the expressiveness of the congregation in times of worship” (Twumasi-Ankrah, 1994, p. 96). These “separatist” sects, as they were called earlier on, tended more easily to revert to indigenous forms of music though some in the 1950s still used the hymn books of the mother church from which they broke away (Parrinder, 1956, p. 37).

During the 1920s, for instance, “the church of the Twelve Apostles not only clapped and swayed but also danced to the rhythms of gourd rattles, while the Musama Disco Christo Church employed traditional Fante “asafo” (warrior) drums” (Collins, 2004, p. 410). Moreover, the praises and choruses of these churches were greatly influenced by local popular music such as Highlife, and some were using instruments of dance bands (e.g., guitar, bongos, double bass, etc.) as early as the 1950s (Collins, 2004). And by the 1960s, the Musama Disco Christo Church, for example, had “developed a great wealth of Fanti lyric music with words on the usual themes of evangelistic-revivalist preaching” (Baeta, 1962, p. 53).

The AICs laid emphasis on new forms of worship which involved a lot of singing, drumming, and other traditional practices. The use of traditional tunes and vernacular hymns was prevalent and tunes were sung in two and three-

part traditional harmonies (Darkwa, 1974). It has been suggested that local choruses began with the AICs and the older Pentecostal churches and that these songs whose authors are mostly unknown “were adopted by these churches as their liturgical music” (Agordoh, 2011, p. 38).

Music in Pentecostal/charismatic churches

The development of music in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana is closely linked with global technological advancement, the growth of the Christian music industry, and activities of para-church organizations. Advancement in technology has made it possible for ideas and also music to flow from one culture to another. On the American scene, contemporary worship music is said to have emerged in the 1970s and the early 1980s in the Charismatic church network of American churches such as Calvary Chapel and Vineyard Churches and by the 1990s worship music record labels had sprung up. Key among these were Maranatha! Music, Vineyard Music, and Hosanna! Music. These record labels marketed new contemporary worship music to larger audiences (Bowler & Reagan, 2014, p. 225).

In Ghana, gospel music, began to assume “an increasingly prominent position in Ghanaian religious and social life” from the late 1980s onwards and “the boom in gospel music coincided with the phenomenal spread of the charismatic movement” (Atiemo, 2006, p. 142). The growth of the Christian music industry both locally and globally has had a significant impact on the musical culture of Ghanaian Pentecostals. The musical tradition of Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity has therefore been fed by global as well as local gospel and contemporary worship music. Thus, it is impossible to separate

Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal from gospel music. They are inextricably linked (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2000).

Again, one cannot speak of musical developments in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity without reference to the activities of para-church organizations. The role of evangelistic youth musical teams which sprung up from the 1970s is worth mentioning. The rise of such groups began with the establishment of the group, Joyful Way Incorporated in the early 1970s. Subsequently, others such as the Hour of Visitation Choir, Calvary Road Inc., and New Creations emerged (Atiemo, 2006; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2000).

These groups, which were made up mainly of students, shook up the Christian music scene with their use of “Western jazz instruments and contemporary musical forms in evangelism” and paved the way for “the integration of the once tabooed instruments and popular gospel music into the worship of most churches” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2000, p, 153). Also, from the 1960s, Scripture Union (SU) fellowships became the main nondenominational Christian organization that was operating in Ghana’s post primary educational institutions. These fellowships were known as Scripture Union (SU) in the secondary schools and Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students (GHAFES) in the tertiary institutions (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2000). These fellowships usually had singing groups modelled after groups like Joyful Way Incorporated which also aided in the popularization of gospel and contemporary worship music among the youth.

General church music practice

In Ghanaian Christianity, one finds that worship music encompasses the musical traditions of the ‘different Christianities.’ The historic mission churches

still maintain 'formal' liturgical music (hymns, anthems, masses, etc.) and in an attempt at 'pentecostalisation' of their liturgy, have introduced elements of Pentecostal worship.

The music of the AICs was, originally, more traditionally-oriented. Some, such as the Mozama Disco Christo Church (MDCC), use 'formal' music, particularly, locally composed hymns and anthems. Pentecostal Christianity has popularised the use of locally-composed as well as internationally-known choruses, local gospel music, and contemporary Christian worship music from the west. It has been noted that the different Christian denominations have borrowed from each other's musical traditions (Agordoh, 2011).

Worship music in the historic mission churches, as mentioned earlier, includes masses, hymns and anthems from western and local sources. There has also been a breed of African composers of the 'western classical tradition' who have composed over the years a relatively large body of works that blend western idioms with local text and other African elements. Compositions from these musicians circulate in the historic mission churches through a network of musical associations such as those of church choirs and singing bands, etc.

In the recent past, the Harmonious Chorale, the music wing of the Salt and Light Ministries headed by Dr. Joyce Aryee, has organized events showcasing the compositions of individual Ghanaian art music composers and made recordings of these works which are performed by various musical groups in the country. The musicians and composers of such music that feed the musical style of historic mission churches are mainly products of music schools and universities who have been formally trained in music.

Music for Pentecostal worship, on the other hand, is drawn largely from recordings of the Christian music industry both local and international. One usually finds a mix of music from these two sources in Pentecostal worship. Musicians in Pentecostalism usually state that they do ‘gospel’ or ‘contemporary gospel music’ and that distinguishes them from musicians of the historic mission churches. The term ‘gospel’ is used generically to refer to all music of the pop music genre that has Christian religious text whether locally or internationally produced. The label ‘foreign gospel’ is given to Christian gospel music produced outside Ghanaian borders. One would observe that in Pentecostal/Charismatic churches found in rural or semi-rural communities, the ‘local gospels’ are generally used, while churches in urban settings, and particularly, those that attach ‘international’ to their names focus more on foreign gospel. In Ghana, therefore, there is no clear distinction between ‘gospel’ and ‘contemporary Christian music’ as exists in America.

Although a lot has been written about gospel highlife, the current musical output of gospel musicians goes beyond highlife and is modelled after foreign gospel or contemporary Christian music (e.g., some pieces by Danny Netey, Sonnie Badu, Qwesi Oteng, Eugene Zuta, Edwin Dadson, Joe Mettle, etc.). It may therefore be more appropriate to refer to the body of works as contemporary Ghanaian Christian music. The charismatic movement has produced many artistes whose work in turn feed the movement.

There has also been interaction between local and international artistes, as captured in news items from some Ghanaian media houses. For example, American gospel artistes and worship leaders Don Moen, Alvin Slaughter, and Kirk Franklin have performed in Ghana for the programme dubbed ‘*Adom*

Praise'. The 2015 edition of Adom Praise was set to feature another American artiste, Hezekiah Walker. In 2013, Donnie McClurkin was in Ghana and was the main feature for the *MTN Ghana Stands in Worship Concert* held at the Accra Sports Stadium and the event was attended by over twenty thousand worshippers. On October 10, 2015, American gospel artiste William McDowell shared the stage with Nigeria's Sinach and Ghanaian gospel musicians for the second edition of the event. This interaction has boosted the gospel music industry and promoted the genre widely.

Worship in Pentecostal/Charismatic churches is said to be vibrant particularly because of the mode of musical expression which is closely linked to popular culture and thus appeals to a larger audience. With regard to instrumentation, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches make use of jazz bands consisting of guitars, keyboard, horns, and drums. The main instrument used traditionally in historic mission churches is the organ. In the large cathedrals and churches of the historic mission churches found in cities, the pipe organ is used. However, many of these churches now have jazz bands aimed at providing a 'pentecostal atmosphere' within their otherwise 'rigid' liturgy. Some Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, on the other hand, have also introduced 'formal' music in order, perhaps, to retain their members who come in from the historic mission churches.

In spite of the attempt to 'formalise' Pentecostal worship on the one hand, and to 'pentecostalise' orthodox worship on the other hand, there are sharp differences between these two Christian movements with regard to music-making and worship experience. It has been argued that the uniqueness of pneumatic Christianity lies in its "Sprit-inspired worship" (Asamoah-Gyadu,

2013, p.17). Indeed, Spirit-inspired worship is the hallmark of the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition, Worship in these churches is designed in such a way as to make worshippers have an encounter with God. It has been noted that “when Ghanaian Christians leave older historic mission churches for Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, they do so partly because in the latter, they walk into new forms of worship” (p. 18). Pentecostal/Charismatic churches devote a large chunk of their worship time to ‘praise and worship’ which is one segment of their liturgy. In this segment, which may last thirty minutes or more, there is a continuous flow of music involving a worship leader, a worship or praise team, and the entire congregation.

Chapter Summary

The context of the current study is established through a discussion of Pentecostalism and African Christianity with a focus on Ghana. An examination of music in Ghanaian Christianity highlights the differences in musical practice between historic mission churches and P/cs. Despite the differences, it is observed that worship music in Ghanaian Christianity largely cuts across the different Christian denominations. However, Spirit-inspired worship distinguishes P/cs from the older historic mission churches.

CHAPTER FIVE

MUSIC IN RITUAL: THE WORSHIP SERVICE IN MCCM

Introduction

It has been noted that “Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is characterized by an emphasis on the continuous manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit (the charismata), on personal salvation, the immanent return of Christ, and not least by high degrees of ritual activity” (Lindhardt, 2011, p.1). Attention has also been drawn to “P/cs formation of tight communities around a high-intensity, time-consuming ritual life” where “services ... rarely lasts less than two hours and sometimes go most of the night” (Robbins, 2004, pp. 123-124). In order to understand P/c spirituality therefore it is critical to examine its ritual life, for as Albrecht (1999) points out, “ritual enfold the secrets of Pentecostal spirituality” and “to comprehend the Pentecostal ethos, one must consider the core ritual” which is “the worship service” (p. 150). For this reason, I begin with a brief description of MCCM as a P/c denomination, and a presentation of the ritual life of MCCM with highlights on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the church’s activities. Further, I will discuss the nature of music and music-making in MCCM worship services.

The Setting

The Mount Calvary Cross Ministry (MCCM) started in 1985 with about twenty-two founding members. The first Head Pastor led the church until his demise in 2018, and subsequently, a new leader was appointed. The church is a member of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC). It has over fifty branches in the Greater Accra, Central, Eastern, Ashanti, Bono, and Volta regions and has its headquarters at Achimota in Accra. At the headquarters,

services are held in two locations. Weekday services are held at the old church premises at Odorkor, and Sunday services at the Achimota auditorium, called the House of Refuge. The auditorium seats over a thousand congregants on special occasions. An average of 600 worshippers meet for service on Sundays.

MCCM is founded on the word of God, that is, the Bible. It is a soul-winning ministry with a prophetic orientation. The church thrives on Bible studies, prayer and fasting, music and prophetism. It is perhaps one of the few Ghanaian P/c churches with a vibrant music ministry as well as a structured prophetic ministry with multiple ‘actors’.

The church believes in conversion through repentance (i.e. being “born again”), baptism by immersion, and Holy Spirit baptism. The gifts of the Holy Spirit which are listed in the Pauline writings (I Corinthians 12: 8-10) are seen in operation in the church, the most obvious being prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, and discernment of spirits.

Key tenets

As indicated earlier, MCCM thrives on Bible studies, prayer and fasting, music and prophetism. First of all, systematic Bible study is done at all levels of the ministry’s work. The pastors have a time for Bible study, and likewise the church workers and individual groups within the church. Bible study is also done on Sundays before services, and also at counselling sessions.

Secondly, the church leadership and congregation engage in intense prayer often accompanied with fasting. In the early days of the church, the entire congregation engaged in a 3-day fast every fortnight during the Devotion Week (also called “Tarry Week”). Members also fast during the Revival Week which

occurs at least three times in a year. Various groups in the church as well as individuals have their own fasting regimen apart from the church programme.

Regarding music, there are three main music groups with different leaders. There is the main church choir, the Senior Choir (recently named the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry Choir or MCCM Choir), the Youth Choir (now Glorious Choir) and the Worship Team. Altogether, the Senior and Youth Choirs have over 150 singers with a team of about ten bandsmen/musicians. The Worship Team is made up of a few members of the two main choirs and some members of the congregation. The various choirs and music groups feature prominently in church events.

The ministry also has a structured prophetic ministry with a group that is made up of over twenty members who have varying degrees of spiritual gifts including the gift of prophecy. They are known as the Vessels. These are men and women endowed with varying levels of spiritual gifts. Some prophecy, others operate the gifts of word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discernment of spirits, and some receive revelations through visions and dreams, etc. Of this group, there are key members who appear to be those with great experience and they feature prominently in services while the others do their work in the background. The Vessels meet regularly for prayer and Bible study and for guidance regarding the operation of the gifts.

Other church groups

Apart from the music groups and the vessels, there are other groups such as the Soul-Winners, Prayer Force, Nehemiah Group, Ushers, and so on. The deacons and deaconesses are referred to as Soldiers of the Cross.

The Ritual Life of MCCM

Worship in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity has been researched by Daniel E. Albrecht using the lens of ritual studies. In his work, ritual connotes “those acts, actions, dramas and performances that a community creates, continues, recognizes and sanctions as ways of behaving that express appropriate attitudes, sensibilities, values and beliefs within a given situation” (Albrecht, 1999, p. 22). He applies the term ‘ritual’ to the corporate worship service. It is this meaning and application of ritual that is employed in this study. Thus, Albrecht’s ritual approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality provides a framework for discussing the activities of MCCM.

In this segment, I present the ritual life of MCCM, that is, church activities and services, with the view to ascertain whether the ritual interpretations offered by Albrecht can be mapped out onto worship in MCCM. The structure and duration of services, and the nature of worship music is presented. Music performance practices and congregational expressions toward music/ musical behaviour are discussed. A comparison is also made regarding the ritual life of the church in the pre-COVID and COVID periods due to the fact that the data collection spans between 2019 and 2021.

Looking at the ritual framework, there is the field with elements within it. The ritual field, according to Grimes “is a physical-social place where one goes to do a study, as well as a pattern of interconnecting forces” (Grimes, 1982, as cited in Albrecht, 1999, p. 122). He further describes it as comprising “both the locus of ritual practices and the totality of the ritual’s structures and processes”. As Albrecht explains, there are three ritual elements within this field, namely, ritual time, ritual space and ritual identity. Ritual time operates on three

levels. First, the cycle of weekly and annual services and events, the lifetime cycle (conversion, baptism, spirit baptism, healings) and time within the worship service itself.

With regard to the weekly and annual cycle (mainly Sunday and mid-week services), MCCM observes Christmas and Easter. The two major events on the church's calendar are the Easter and Christmas Retreats which last four and five days respectively. They are organized at the regional level. Retreats are usually preceded by Revivals (i.e. weeklong services accompanied by fasting). A Retreat usually begins with an evening service and ends with an all-night service.

Revivals and retreats are intense periods of spiritual activity when an extensive move of the Spirit is expected. A lot of prayer and fasting goes into the preparation for these periods. Believers spend long periods in church services praying and expecting to hear from God either through the scripture readings, sermon, song ministration or through prophecies and revelations. In these services, a lot of time is allotted for song ministration which goes together with prophetic activity. Revivals are held weeklong with three services daily – the main daily service is in the evenings. The morning and afternoon sessions are mainly for prayer. In retreats, morning and evening services each last over four hours with the first hour and half devoted to intercessory and personal prayer. Branches within the Greater Accra region converge at the church's headquarters and all the music groups and choirs from these branches including the headquarters choirs have the opportunity to minister throughout the revivals and retreats.

During weekday services, revivals and retreats, a segment of the service is devoted to song ministration. This occurs after the sermon and altar call. The service conductor will normally precede this session with a call to prayer after which the various choirs and groups or in some cases, individuals will be called to minister in song. This is the time when prophecy and revelations are expected even though they can occur anytime during the service. On Sundays, however, the choirs minister during the vetting of testimonies, before the sermon, during communion, and sometimes during offering.

Service structure

Regarding ritual time in Sunday worship, Albrecht speaks of five *foundational/processual rites*. He notes that, “a rite can be understood as any act or set of acts, actions or activities widely recognized, sanctioned and handed down by the faith community” (Albrecht, 1999, p. 153). The foundational rites consist of the three primary ‘building block’ rites, namely, the rite of praise and worship, the rite of pastoral message (the sermon), and the altar/response rite, in addition to the gathering/dispersing rites and transitional rites of the main ritual. These *foundational/processual rites* provide the basic structure of the core Pentecostal/charismatic ritual (i.e. the liturgy).

A look at ritual time in Sunday and weekday worship in MCCM indicates some alterations of the structure outlined above. The rite of praise and worship is broken into two separate units, and they occur at different times within services. One can therefore speak of the rite of worship as being separate from the rite of praise. MCCM operates with a very structured order of service. There are, however, slight variations between the order of service for weekday and Sunday services. Weekday services begin at 5pm and the congregation led

by the service conductor prays for about forty minutes. This is followed by scripture reading in English, Ga and Twi. The worship segment lasts for about fifteen minutes. The second scripture reading precedes the period for praises. The sermon normally lasts for thirty minutes and it is followed by the altar call. The rest of the service is devoted to song ministration which is often accompanied by the move of the Spirit through prophetic activity. In these instances, charismatic rites (i.e., prophecy, word of knowledge, revelations) occur in conjunction with music rites. The offering is taken with song ministration, and then the announcements and notices are given. The service closes after the benediction is given.

Testimonies also have their place in services. On Fridays, and also on Sundays, time is set aside for testimonies. All testimonies are vetted before presentation. Song ministration is done while the vetting process goes on. Unlike the weekday services, Sunday morning services do not begin with long prayer sessions, and ministration by the choirs usually takes place before the sermon, and also during communion.

Following changes in the church programme, testimonies are not given every Sunday but rather on designated Sundays. The procession of the choirs at the beginning of Sunday services has also ceased due to the introduction of an hour of congregational Bible studies before the service.

It is apparent from the foregoing that there is a clear structure of the liturgy for weekday and Sunday services. The modifications that occur are as a result of unpredictable divine manifestations. As observed in the MCCM services, music permeates all aspects of the services. Each service is unique and congregants usually expect the move of the Spirit.

There have also been further changes to services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. No in-person weekday services have been held since the resumption of church gatherings after the COVID break from March to July, 2020. The duration of the Sunday service has been reduced to two hours in line with the directive from the Ghana government regarding worship services. To ensure social distancing on stage in order to curb the spread of COVID-19, each choir has been divided into groups of about 20 members apiece. Singing is done with face masks and there is no song ministration during communion.

Service duration

An observation of the services in MCCM reveal a highly intense ritual life. In pre-COVID times, Sunday services began at 7:00am. The pastors, soldiers, choristers, and other groups met from about 6:00am to pray in preparation for each service. Services lasted over three hours. Weekday services, which usually began at 5:00pm, also lasted three hours. During revivals, there were three sessions – morning (10:00am – 12:00pm), afternoon (1:00pm – 2:30pm), and evening (4:00pm – 8:00pm). The morning and afternoon sessions which are optional, were purely for intercessory and personal prayer, while the evening sessions were full services. Retreats, on the other hand, began with a three-hour evening service. On subsequent days, there were two sessions, morning and evening, each lasting four hours. In effect, eight hours were spent per day in services. The climax of the retreat was an all-night service, from around 10:00pm to 5:00am. The all-night service in the Easter Retreat was held on Easter Sunday night into Easter Monday, and that of the Christmas Retreat occurred on the eve of the New Year (i.e., Watch Night Service).

While intercessory and personal prayer take up most of the ritual time, the music rites as well as the charismatic rites appear to be the most time-consuming activities, as will be seen in the discussion of the flow of services in the next chapter.

The restrictions imposed on churches due to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes in church activity. The church held on-line services during the lockdown and even beyond the lockdown, and only resumed in-person services in September, 2020. The duration of services has been limited to two hours in compliance with the government's COVID-19 directives. Despite the challenges associated with these directives, a revival and a retreat have been organized under these restrictions using both in-person and on-line approaches. The COVID-19 restrictions on service duration has greatly reduced ritual time in MCCM. It remains to be seen whether the impact of the restrictions is negative or positive.

The Nature of Music in MCCM

Nekola (2015) notes that “music functions in congregational worship in many ways: as a vehicle for content, a site of sensory engagement, a means of connection to tradition, a place for personal expression and a channel for emotion” and she adds that “for still others of us, music in worship enables not only human ritual and social connection but also our access to the Divine” (p.2.). The primary role of music within Pentecostal/Charismatic ritual is to transport the congregants into the presence of God. Music also stimulates the kinaesthetic dimension of Pentecostal worship.

Among Pentecostal ritual sounds, according to Albrecht (1999) , music also functions as an auditory icon. Pentecostals use music in particular “to

facilitate the creation of their ritual field” (p. 143). In other words, particular musical sounds signal a Pentecostal/Charismatic ritual field. The kind of instruments that are used, the songs that are sung, and the overall sonic effect that is created set the stage for Pentecostal ritual.

In MCCM, generally, contemporary gospel music – foreign and local- is mostly used alongside choruses, hymns and anthems. On rare occasions, canticles are sung in song ministration. The songs used are predominantly in English, Twi and Ga and occasionally in Ewe. The leaders of the music groups use their discretion in the choice of songs. As exemplified in one service, the contemporary gospel music used included those by Ghanaian, Nigerian, South African, and American artistes: “You are Alpha and Omega” (Israel Houghton), “Awesome God” (Sinach), “Moko Be” (Nii Okai), “Praise is what I do” (William Murphy), “Anwanwa Dɔ” (Cindy Thompson), “Yesu wo dɔ” (Noble Nketia), “Thank you, Lord” (Rebecca Malope) and “Listen to our hearts” (Geoff Moore/Steven Curtis Chapman). Anthems such as “Psalm 150” (Laudate Deo), “Hallelujah, Amen” (from *Judas Maccabaeus*), and excerpts from Handel’s *Messiah* are also heard on special occasions.

The band accompanies all the singing groups. The instruments used are keyboard, lead guitar, bass guitar, drum set, percussion, trumpets, alto and tenor saxophones. The sound of the band pervades the atmosphere and produces together with the voices a “transcendent” acoustic environment. There are also moments of silence when only the keyboard is heard. This signals that a vessel is recounting to the Head Pastor revelations seen in the course of the service for vetting before delivery.

In MCCM, as indicated earlier, worship is separated from praises. Worship leaders are part of the Worship Team and they do their work according to a schedule. The duty of a worship leader is to lead the congregation into the presence of the Lord through a sequence of songs in free rhythm and slow tempo. In worship, the tempo of songs has to be slow to enable worshippers to focus. Usually, common choruses and well-known songs are used to enable full participation of the congregation. For praises, upbeat tunes are used and members have the opportunity to dance vigorously. Similar songs are used during deliverance sessions in which case members would be praying and not dancing.

In retreats, revivals, and weekday services, time is allotted for song ministration by the various choirs after the sermon and altar call. This period may be considered as a waiting time set aside by the church to hear from the Lord. The choirs present songs from their repertoire and this is interspersed with prophetic activity.

Music Performance

The performance of music in MCCM is not considered as entertainment. The term “performance” is not used, but rather “ministration”. The main slots for ministration are the worship segment, choir ministration, and praises. Apart from these, musical activity occurs throughout the service. This includes brief instrumental interludes to accompany prayer, transitional songs, songs for offertory, songs during prophetic activity and deliverance sessions, etc.

The worship segment is the longest period for ministration and it lasts between twenty and thirty minutes. As indicated earlier, the music for worship is slow, reflective and contemplative in nature. Worship usually begins with a

few songs in free style, followed by other songs in strict rhythm. A few songs in free rhythm are used to conclude the worship.



Figure 1: The Mount Calvary Cross Ministry Choir (Senior Choir)



Figure 2: The Glorious Choir (Youth Choir)

The activities of the various music groups during services reflect a vibrancy in music ministration, despite the acoustic challenges observed in the main church auditorium (i.e., House of Refuge). The overall sonic effect is often affected by these challenges but congregants appear unperturbed by them.

Congregational behaviour towards music

During worship, members who are “moved” come forward to the altar space to dance and worship (see Figure 4). The dance is organized in a circular procession in the altar space between the congregational space and the platform/stage.



Figure 3: Cross-section of congregation listening to song ministration with a sister standing as she is moved by the song



Figure 4: Pastors and congregation in a procession during worship.

Oftentimes, members raise their hands and sway to the left and right according to the rhythm as they move along until the worship ends. Some kneel in front of

the stage. There is generally an outward show of emotion with some shedding tears.



Figure 5: The congregation in worship with lifted hands



Figure 6: Congregation during worship

During praises, however, the choristers lead the procession to dance from the altar space through the aisles and any member can then follow them (see Fig. 7).



Figure 7: Choristers lead the congregation during praises



Figure 8: The band and congregation in praises

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the church does not allow members to move forward to dance during worship or praises. Members are asked to stay in their positions as part of the safety protocols. With the wearing of masks, it is impossible to see the facial expressions of members. Nevertheless, the COVID restrictions seem not to have deterred members from expressing themselves during services. It is still common to see some members rise to their feet with lifted hands when moved by some song ministration (see Figure 3).

Chapter Summary

The ritual life of MCCM which was highly intense has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant restrictions. While the sonic image of MCCM may not be different from other P/cs in the Ghanaian context, the use of music as a means of waiting for manifestations of the Spirit appears to be unique. While the worship rite is separated from the praises rite, other music rites are employed in conjunction with the charismatic rites. Congregants express themselves through dance and outward show of emotion which are facilitated through music. Music, as observed in the activities of the various music groups, plays an important role in the ritual life of MCCM.

CHAPTER SIX

PROPHETISM IN RITUAL: THE FLOW OF SERVICES IN MCCM

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the ritual life of the MCCM Pentecostals, the nature of music and its ministration, as well as congregational behaviour towards music. In this chapter, the prophetic ministry, the flow of worship services, and the work of those engaged in prophetism are described in addition to the role of music in prophetic activity.

The Prophetic Ministry

As a movement, Pentecostalism is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it differs from the other strands of Christianity by the way it affirms and consciously promotes the experiences of the Holy Spirit in church life. The term “charismatic” is derived from *charismata*, which means “gifts of grace”, and the aim of the charismatic movement is to revitalize church life through “the restoration of the *charismata pneumatika*, the graces of the Spirit, to its worship life” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p.6).

Of great importance are the spiritual gifts listed in I Corinthians 12: 8 – 10. These spiritual gifts, which include prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discernment of spirits, are “supernatural manifestations which cannot be acquired through any natural means. They can only be bestowed by the will of the Holy Spirit through His own supernatural means according to the assignment He has given” and the belief and desire of the believer (Ollennu, 2019, p. 97). The aforementioned appear to be the core gifts employed in the prophetic ministry in MCCM.

Ollennu (2019) and Csordas (1990, 1997) offer definitions and explanations of these gifts. By definition,

“the gift of prophecy is the ability to say what God is saying or would have said in a particular situation and time. By this gift, the believer receives what God has to say to a particular people or person, at a specific time, and passes it on in a language understandable by the recipients of the message” (Ollennu, 2019, p. 115).

An example of a New Testament prophet being Agabus (Acts 11:27-28; Acts 21:10-11). It has been noted that “charismatic prophecy is typically not reported speech [...] by definition, prophecy is the deity speaking directly through the prophet in the present moment” (Csordas, 1997, pp. 212-213). In addition, “prophecy is regarded as a spiritual gift, in the use of which one can “grow” or become increasingly experienced” (Csordas, 1997, p. 228).

In connection with word of knowledge, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit which operates as an informative tool. It is, again, “an impartation of a little bit of God’s ability to know things hidden and unhidden. It may manifest in the form of visions, dreams, interpretation of dreams, supernatural intuition or knowing as informed by the Holy Spirit” (Ollennu, 2019, p.101). It is also “a form of revelation understood as a divine gift of knowledge about persons or situations not acquired through any channel of human communication, but experienced as a spontaneous thought or image” (Csordas, 1990, p. 19).

The gift of the word of wisdom may be described as “an impartation of a tiny bit of God’s own ability to know and take the right decisions and actions” and it is basically “directive in nature” (Ollennu, 2019, p. 98), whilst

discernment of spirits is a gift that imparts “the ability to identify and/or differentiate between spirits operating behind an activity or behaviour. There are three types of spirits to be discerned: the *Holy Spirit*, *human spirit* and *demonic spirits*” (Ollennu, 2019, p. 102).

In MCCM, the Vessels are the recognized individuals who are spiritually endowed with these gifts, and their work is critical in the church. They deliver messages given to them by the Holy Spirit for the edification and growth of the church. The term prophetism is employed in this study to describe collectively the prophetic activities and utterances of the Vessels in MCCM.

The Flow of Services

The ministry has a clearly structured order of service which is at the same time flexible enough to accommodate the outward move of the Holy Spirit. Services differ from each other depending on whether there is what may be described as a ‘visible’ or ‘invisible’ move of the Spirit. The visible move of the Spirit is characterized by prophecy and revelations during the service. The absence of these does not imply that there is no move of the Spirit, but rather that the move is invisible. The visible move, however, meets the expectations of believers as they experience the presence of God in a clear manner, and such encounters appear to have a great impact on them. Thus, the Pentecostals’ expectation of an experiential encounter with God is met when there is an outward manifestation of the presence of God.

An account is given in the vignette below of an instance of the visible move of the Spirit which occurred in one of the evening services during a revival in 2019:

The service started at 4pm with an intercessory and personal prayer session that lasted an hour and twenty minutes. A passage from Isaiah 40:10-15 was read in English, Ga and Twi. The worship leader began the worship by admonishing the congregation, saying "... lift up your hands and bless the name of the Lord; He deserves our worship for his goodness and his kindness, for his faithfulness ... bless the name of the Lord." While the worship leader was speaking, the band was playing in the background. Right after his opening words, he launched into worship singing *Onyame, dza aye dɔɔso, W'adom ntsi na yetse ase...* [Lord, you have done so much; It is by your grace that we are alive]. The opening song and the two others that followed were in free rhythm and contemplative. Then other songs were sung in slow tempo. The worship ended with songs in free rhythm. All through the worship, members of the congregation who were moved came in front to dance with hands lifted and moving in an orderly manner. After the worship, a couple of songs were sung as transition to the segment of praises. The Worship Team then sang *Nara Ekele Mo* [Take my thanksgiving/Receive my praise] before the sermon. After the altar call and prayer for the next session, and just when the Joy Choir was called, a vessel stood up and began to speak in tongues. The Head Pastor asked the congregation to pray and commit the vessel into God's hand. Then a song was raised by the Worship Team who had mounted the stage. The Head Pastor

prayed that the Lord should speak to his children. The vessel then moved through the congregation while the Worship Team sang. The prophetic activity began around 7pm and lasted till 8:50pm, that is, close to two hours. The Lord used the vessel to call in succession about seventeen individuals for whom there were different messages. The vessel spoke in Ga and it was translated into English and Twi. Each revelation was followed by a song raised by the Worship Team. Some of the members who were called had to be prayed with, in which case the congregation prayed with them, and some also had to go through deliverance. The deliverance session was accompanied by songs, and was carried out by the Head Pastor, the Pastors and the Soldiers. After the prophetic activity, there was a brief prayer to thank the Lord for his move and to pray for the vessel. The rest of the service, namely the offering and announcements were done quickly and the service ended after the benediction. [Field Notes, Wed. 20th Nov., 2019]

In instances where there is an extensive move of the Spirit before the time for the sermon, a passage of scripture is read in place of the sermon, after which the altar call is made. Such is the extent of the flexibility of service structure.

The Vessels

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of Vessels in MCCM. These are members who have varying degrees of spiritual gifts. Of the group of Vessels, there are a few key ones who function frequently during services. There

are three key female vessels who have been practising as such for over 30 years. All of them were interviewed individually.

Sister Georgina Peters has the gift of word of knowledge and can also hear and see spiritually. The two other sisters, Mavis Gyan and Anowa Aikins, have the gift of prophecy in addition to the gift of word of knowledge, as well as the ability to hear and see spiritually. The three have a wealth of experience having served the MCCM community for over three decades.

As key vessels, as often as they are led, they communicate revelations to the congregation. They do so after sharing the revelations with the Head Pastor. There is therefore a system of vetting before a public disclosure of a revelation. As the church leadership explain, revelations are vetted and judged according to scripture. Prophecy, however, is different. It cannot be vetted; once spoken, it cannot be retracted, hence the need for the grooming of the Vessels.

Concerning prophecy, it occurs when a Vessel is moved to rise on her feet at the instance of the Holy Spirit. As observed in the services, prophecy often begins with and is interspersed with glossolalia. The speaking of tongues is thus followed by the interpretation of the tongue, often by the same vessel.

The three Vessels describe their gifts and how they received them. According to Sister Georgina Peters, she received the gift of word of knowledge through a “word from the Lord” given by the first Head Pastor during a church service. This happened over 30 years ago. In her case, the Lord had called her prior to this time and opened her eyes and ears spiritually. It was at a later time that she was anointed by the Lord to receive the gift of word of knowledge.

Sister Anowa Aikins, on the other hand, was anointed a prophet six months after she became a believer some 36 years ago. Prior to that, she had a

couple of dreams in which she saw the Lord using her through prophecy. She however kept it to herself until one day when the Pastor approached her and asked whether she knew that the hand of God was upon her. Subsequently, the Pastor prayed with her from time to time for the Lord to have his own way in her life. Six months after she joined the church, the Lord had her anointed as a prophet. From then on, she began to have dreams; at other times she would hear the voice of God. She kept it all to herself but later divulged it to the Pastor who counselled her and gave her guidance until such a time that a “school” was established for the prophets to guide them through the study of the scriptures.

The experience of Sister Mavis Gyan is somewhat different. She was in church on a Good Friday, and the church was praying at around 3pm. She says that “all of a sudden, I saw that the Holy Spirit ‘took me’ and I was prophesying.” That, she says, is how God started with her. According to her, it took about four to six years before she started seeing spiritually, and that also happened during a fasting and prayer session at church.

Sister Mavis explains that, once a person sees spiritually, he/she has to also hear spiritually. But it is possible for one to hear only but not see. In her own case, she received all her gifts directly and not through a prophetic word. Sister Mavis also notes that the gift of discernment ought to accompany seeing and hearing to enable one to ascertain what is of God and what is not of God.

The Role of Music in Prophetism

The Vessels interviewed indicate that music has a role to play in their work. However, they also state that without music, the Spirit of God can work through them whenever he pleases.

It is expected that a Vessel prepares him/herself at all times, and even before coming to the worship service. This preparation involves intense prayer, fasting and the study and application of the word of God. This is preparation that goes on daily in the life of the Vessel. Once the church congregates, a Vessel who is prepared also needs to make him/herself available for the Lord to use. This means that the Vessel ought to resign him/herself by relaxing spiritually and yielding one's mind and heart to the Lord.

Music is able to help the Vessel to focus on the Lord, as those interviewed explain. Sister Mavis Gyan states:

Most at times, no matter how you'd pray, the words in a song can help you to be really in the Spirit and you are able to have real communication with the Lord. That is, the words in a song (M. Gyan, personal communication, June 15, 2021).

Sister Anowa Aikins concurs with the statement above and explains further:

If there's music, it helps you to tune your mind and be more focused. Because you are focused, you have a good communion with the Lord. You can open up and so if the Lord wants to pick you up to use you, it's easier for him to do so because you've made yourself ready [available] (A. Aikins, personal communication, May 27, 2021).

Another vessel, Sister Georgina Peters reiterates the need for preparation on the part of the Vessel. She acknowledges that "music plays a major role where the work of God is concerned", however, "music can be played well but when you [as a vessel] are also not prepared, the music can be right, but you will just be there [not ready] (G. Peters, personal communication, May 25, 2021). She

further explains that a Vessel should have the understanding that if he/she makes him/herself available, the Lord can speak to him/her anywhere and not only in church or in the sanctuary. Likewise, when the church meets for worship, a Vessel must be prepared should the Lord decide to use him/her.

Another key point the Vessels make is about the sovereignty of God. He decides when to move and who to use, with or without music. Sister Anowa Aikins states that, “if music is going on and God has not decided to work, he will not work. So it is not automatic that once music is going on, the anointing is there to carry you into the Spirit” (personal communication, May 27, 2021). She further cautions that:

[A vessel] should not think [presume/assume] that there should be music before God will use you, or that because music is going on, God must use you. No. It is God who decides. As for that it is God who decides. You can play music the whole day, but if God doesn’t want to come in to use anybody, you just have to praise the Lord (A. Aikins, personal communication, May 27, 2021).

Music, however, helps the Vessels in their work in many ways. First of all, music can ‘lift up the spirit’ of a Vessel. Sister Mavis Gyan puts it this way:

So as a vessel, when a song is being sung, maybe the choir is singing or an individual is singing, the song can uplift your spirit so that maybe if you are just there and you have not made yourself available for the Lord, when you hear the song, it’s as if you are sleeping and you’ve been called. The song will lift up your spirit and will cause you to be alert, and enable you to relax

in your heart, your mind and everything unto the Lord. And maybe, while the song is going on, you can hear the voice of God and he can tell you something. While the song is going on, because the song has caused you to relax in the spirit, the Lord can reveal something to you (M. Gyan, personal communication, June 15, 2021).

Music therefore causes one to be alert spiritually, and enables the Vessel to relax in the Spirit. Once a Vessel is alert and relaxed, the Spirit of God may reveal something to him/her.

Again, certain songs enable Vessels to focus intently on God. Such songs, because the text is meaningful and ministers to the Vessel, it plunges him/her deeper in the Spirit, enabling them to receive deeper revelations as Sister Anowa Aikins points out:

For example, “Faithful God, so unchanging”. As they sing it, if God wants to use me, or is using me, and that kind of music comes, because with understanding, the words in the music ministers to me. You see? So with that kind of understanding, it takes me deeper in the spirit. As a vessel, if the music goes down that way, it helps you to go deep in the spirit. And someone can ask you, ‘how do you go deep in the spirit?’ If you are deep in the spirit, God reveals deeper revelations to you. You see? So it is good that music plays its part (A. Aikins, personal communication, May 27, 2021).

Thirdly, music sustains the Vessel in the Spirit when he/she is being used by the Lord. Sometimes, a Vessel may be used for more than two hours during

church services. Oftentimes, this kind of prophetic activity is interspersed with spontaneous music raised by the Worship Team.

Prophetism, Intercessory Prayer and Music

Prophetic utterances, particularly, words of knowledge, often require that the individual or group mentioned in the revelation should be either prayed with, or taken through deliverance. The individual, or group, will then face the congregation in the altar space, and usually, a song will be spontaneously raised by the Pastor in charge before the congregation is asked to pray. By means of such intercessory prayer, congregants appear to be compassionate and sensitive to each other's needs.

If someone is to undergo deliverance, the person will be surrounded by the Pastors and Soldiers, in the altar space, with the Worship Team on stage singing upbeat songs accompanied by the band throughout the period of deliverance. The congregants will support the Pastors and Soldiers in prayer as the deliverance is carried out. There are times when two or more people called out through prophecies/revelations have to be taken through deliverance. The process of prayer and music-making is repeated until all the people called out have had their turn. When prayer is going on, the band will play music in the background until the prayer is over. Congregants therefore spend a great deal of ritual time praying for others, and this is often accompanied by music.

Chapter Summary

The core gifts of the Spirit employed in the prophetic ministry in MCCM include prophecy and word of knowledge. In MCCM, the Vessels are the recognized members possessing such gifts and they play a key role in services by delivering prophetic words and revelations for the edification of the church.

Although music plays a role in their work, the Vessels can function with or without music as determined by the divine. Music is however seen as a catalyst to enable a vessel's alertness, or as an aid to enable the vessel to intently focus on the divine, or it may sustain the vessel in the Spirit throughout the period he/she is administering the gift. Music also serves as an aid to intercessory prayers as well as deliverance.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MINISTRY OF MUSIC

Introduction

In order to delve deeper into the role of music in Pentecostal worship, this chapter describes the place of music and the processes involved in song ministration and the leading of worship from the perspectives of the MCCM Pentecostals.

The Place of Music

On the basis of their experiences in the history of the church, the MCCM Pentecostals are unanimous in their view of the important role that music plays in their worship services. In a statement, a pastor explained succinctly, “God doesn’t joke with music,” meaning that “he [God] depends on music a lot to do what he wants to do” (G. Yalley, personal communication, October 27, 2020). A worship leader also makes the observation that “whenever music is being sung or anybody is ministering or the choir is singing, it brings the presence [of God] down so much amongst us” (M. Fynn, personal communication, January 13, 2021).

Knowledge about the fact that God depends on music is gleaned from scripture, that God inhabits the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3, King James Version [KJV]). Therefore, the MCCM Pentecostals hold the view that as the believers sing, God moves among them and heals, delivers, opens avenues for them and also provides them with guidance and direction. The benefits therefore of making music in the church setting, in their view, are tremendous. A practical way of showing the importance of music to the church is the establishment of the Toddlers’ Choir which prepares singers for the Children’s Choir for onward

graduation to the Youth and Senior Choirs. This is done to ensure that at all times there are people to minister in song.

Although the church considers its main mission as soul-winning, one observes the gifts of the Holy Spirit in operation – prophecy, word of knowledge, and so on. It is in the operation of these gifts that the believers seem to see the real importance of music. Pastor Ekow Coleman explains:

[...] And when we come to service and the Worship Team or the choirs, or any form of ministration that has to do with music goes very well, it enables the vessels of the Lord to have a very good relationship with the Lord. (Personal communication, October 1, 2020).

Regarding this observation, the MCCM Pentecostals make a biblical reference to the third chapter of the book of Second Kings, where three kings sought the prophet Elisha to consult the Lord on their behalf in connection with a war they were waging against Moab. Elisha was reluctant to do so but obliged out of respect for King Jehoshaphat of Judah, the ally of King Joram. At that juncture, Elisha requested for a musician. The biblical record shows that “when the musician played, ... the hand of the Lord came upon him [Elisha]” and he prophesied saying, “Thus says the Lord ...” (2 Kings 3:15-16, New King James Version [NKJV]).

The reference to this passage of scripture is crucial and underpins the MCCM Pentecostals’ view of music as an aid for the prophet. In this case, “liturgical music is ... portrayed as instrumental in the mediation of divine presence even as the case of Elisha [...] also illustrates” (Muindi, 2012, p.116).

Music Ministration

On the question of how music should be performed or ‘ministered’, the responses from those interviewed cut across issues of tempo, type of songs, choice of songs, as well as the preparation of those who minister in songs.

With tempo, Pastor Coleman says, “I don’t know if it’s our style, but then, we would want our worship music [segment] to have a very slow tempo”, and the reason he gives is that:

We believe that in worshipping God, we need to focus on the Lord and so we would want slow music to be for any worship time, and the vigorous [fast-paced] one ... the one that causes you to shake yourself and move your body for the praises time (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

This is clearly observable in the worship services of MCCM as discussed in the previous chapter. Music for the worship segment is generally slow, reflective and contemplative. The opening song is usually in free style and the entry of the drums highlights the rhythms and enables worshippers to move by swaying in simple dance movements.

The appropriateness of songs for worship are however left to the discretion of the worship and music leaders. As Pastor Yalley points out, “God likes music, so any music that is spiritual, that is gospel music or hymns” is deemed appropriate for use in services. The condition attached is what is crucial, that songs should be sung in the spirit. Pastor Yalley continues:

... any music that is spiritual ... that is sung from the bottom of the heart, if you sing and sing well, you sing and you don’t sing like singing unto people, but singing unto God, the songs coming

from your heart, eh, concentrating on what you are singing, or concentrating on the words of the song, that quickens the Holy Spirit to move in our midst. So the song should be sung in the spirit, not anyhow (G. Yalley, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

The subject of singing in the spirit will be revisited later in detail, but as to the type of music, Pastor Coleman says, “anything that goes with the biblical principles that [they] adhere to, if it goes hand in hand with the scriptures, it is acceptable.” (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

Pastor Ofori Wallace, on the other hand, underscores the vital role of the choir and worship leaders in the choice of songs. He explains that there is a spiritual dimension to the work of the worship and music leaders. He notes succinctly, “... if you are not in the spirit, you can’t give right songs” (O. Wallace, personal communication, October 8, 2020). When the right song is chosen and skilfully ministered, it impacts positively on the hearers or listeners, he argues, referring to the biblical example of the effect of David’s music on Saul (I Samuel 16:14-23, KJV). Still on this subject, Pastor Wallace adds: “So it’s not necessarily the number of songs that is to be sung. One, the person going to lead, how prepared is the person?” (Personal communication, October 8, 2020).

The analogy Pastor Wallace gives is that the worship experience is as though all those in the service are in a vehicle. He explains that “[it’s] like a vehicle. We’re travelling, the one leading is the driver. He’s going to lead us, in this case, he’s leading us to the throne room of God.” (O. Wallace, personal communication, October 8, 2020). In effect, the song or worship leader ought to

be spiritually prepared to carry the worshippers along into the presence of God. So, how does the worship leader, music/choir leader prepare to effectively play this role in the service? This issue will be discussed subsequently through the lens of the music leaders.

It is however expected that a prepared music or song leader, as the “driver of the vehicle” will succeed in transporting worshippers into the throne room of God where there are many blessings to be obtained; and as Pastor Wallace explains, it is at this juncture that the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy and word of knowledge are set in motion for the worshippers to have an encounter with God, and to enable them to receive the blessings they seek. To support this viewpoint, the MCCM leadership refer to instances in the past, and to statements made by the first Head Pastor who was also a vessel. Pastor Coleman narrates the story thus:

Our first head pastor often said, when he comes to church and the worship is so good, it carries him – you know, nobody can stay in the spirit for twenty-four hours. But when the ministration ... in fact, if the worship did not go well, and the choir ministration is good, it also sustains him through the service, because, the Lord may not use him through prophecy, but then it could be word of knowledge. So occasionally he would stand up to give a word. It is the music that got into his system, that made him have a link with the Father that opened up that avenue so the Lord keeps revealing things. (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

Regarding the effect of music on the first Head Pastor, Pastor Coleman continues to say, “but if the worship or the choir ministration is so bad, it affects him. Sometimes, he becomes upset, you know, because he is not able to flow, and so it is that” (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

Another reference is made to an instance where extended praises ushered in a prophetic work, and this occurred during the second Sunday service after the COVID break. Pastor Coleman narrates the incident as follows:

[On that day] we said we were coming to give thanks to God ...

[In that service], we were supposed to spend ten minutes for praises. We realized that the tempo of the praises [the excitement and exuberance] was going higher and higher and so we left it open. For twenty minutes, we were praising God. Just after that, the Lord gave us a word [through prophecy]. (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

Pastor Coleman concludes with these words:

You see, so, when the music goes well, it enables the vessels to focus so much on God. Whilst they pick on the words of the song, they also relate to the Lord and it opens them up for the Lord to do his work. (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

With reference to the biblical examples of David and the story of Elisha, Pastor Wallace corroborates his colleague’s assertion and speaks of the effect of music on the operation of the gifts in this manner: “In fact, it [music] stirs up the gift. It really stirs up the gift” (O. Wallace, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

Preparation towards ministration

A proper preparation towards song ministration is considered as key to a “successful” Pentecostal experience. It involves, first of all, the spiritual and then the musical preparation. As Kraeuter (2007) notes, “the role of the worship leader is not primarily musical. It is, first and foremost, spiritual” (p.17).

The MCCM Pentecostals place a lot of emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the preparation. As the worship leaders indicate, they prioritise an intimate communication with God to ensure they are Spirit-led in their leadership of worship. Sister Grace Hinson explains when asked about how she prepares to lead worship:

It goes with a lot of prayer. I pray a lot. So when you are prayerful, the Holy Spirit himself leads you and guides you in the selection of your songs. (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

I try to find out exactly what she means by “praying a lot” and she clarifies it as follows:

I usually start praying first; there are some people, they will write the songs, they will just go according to the list that they have. But that is not what I do. I will pray, maybe for about an hour. It will depend on the way I feel within me. There are certain times I pray throughout the night because there’s a burden on me to pray ... you see, it’s the Holy Spirit that directs me. (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

Similar to what Sis Grace describes, another worship leader, Sister Marian Fynn, states what she does in preparation for ministration:

When I know that today I am ministering, not necessarily, or maybe I am leading the worship today, for the whole week before Sunday, I start praying and sometimes fasting and reading of the word. And when it is choir, I do the same thing. Because I want to have that sweet communion with God whenever I am ministering. I want to touch his heart so that I will feel his presence. (M. Fynn, personal communication, January 13, 2021).

The MCCM Pentecostals are noted for their intense prayer life. In certain services, the time for prayer goes to about 90 minutes before the other segments of the service continue. In pre-COVID times, the entire congregation engaged in a three-day fast every fortnight along with evening church services from Wednesdays to Fridays and crowned with a Morning Devotion on Saturday. The church members interviewed refer to it as the “Tarry Week.” The Senior Choir also has a fasting day every fortnight, and other groups have their own regimen. The choirs begin their rehearsals with at least thirty minutes of prayer followed by Bible studies, and these precede the actual rehearsal and learning of songs. As the church leadership indicate, the church was founded on intense prayer and fasting. Pastor Wallace is emphatic when he says:

Mount Calvary Cross doesn’t joke with prayer. Whatever we do, we begin with prayer and end with prayer. If you look at almost everything that we do, when it’s time for prayer, we don’t joke with it at all. If you look at our revivals, I’ve been to lots of revivals. When I was in the North I organized revivals over there, we didn’t pray like we pray here [in MCCM] (O. Wallace, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

Long periods of waiting on the Lord by individual pastors, members, and groups, several days of dry fasting, all night prayers – that is how MCCM Pentecostals speak of the foundations of their Ministry.

When in prayer, the MCCM Pentecostals are extremely quiet, usually they pace up and down. Their prayer time includes sessions of intercession for the nation, the Ministry (i.e., MCCM) and the negative revelations which they receive at the beginning of each year through prophecy, as well as personal prayers. They explain that their prayer style is fashioned after the prayer of the Biblical character Hannah. “Now Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard” (I Samuel 1:13, NKJV). In this manner, the MCCM Pentecostals are able to pray for long hours. This characteristic, coupled with lengthy and frequent periods of ritual time, especially during revivals and retreats, make this community a close-knit family of believers.

The attitude of intense prayer is seen in the outlook of those in the music ministry as well. Sister Grace describes the perspective of the church in these words:

Yes. In this ministry, we are more spiritual. You see, there are other ministries, they just want somebody who has a nice voice who can sing. But that is not the case with this ministry. This ministry, they want someone who is prayerful. You see, you must be prayerful and you must try to live a life that is worth living. [...] You must be dedicated and devoted. But the paramount thing is that you must be prayerful, read the Word and live a holy life. Try to live a holy life. (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

The question then arises as to who qualifies to be in the music ministry of the church. The leadership explain that while any member of the church can choose to be part of a musical group, the exception is the Worship Team which requires divine appointment. Pastor Coleman states that, “except the Lord indicates, no one can pick anyone to be a member of the Worship Team” (Personal communication, October 1, 2020).

The Worship Team comprises chosen singers from the Senior Choir, Youth Choir, and from the congregation. The criteria for selection is unknown since it is by divine appointment, usually through a prophetic word just like all the ecclesiastical positions including Pastors, Elders, and Soldiers of the Cross (i.e., deacons). The only titles affixed to names are those for Pastors, Evangelists, and Elders. All other are referred to simply as Sister A, or Brother B.

The worship leaders speak on the process of leading worship. As mentioned earlier, the worship leaders prioritise an intimate communication with God through prayer, fasting and the study of the word in their preparation towards ministration. Although all believers are expected to pray, fast and study the Word, the seriousness the worship leaders attach to their ministry is based on knowledge gleaned from prophetic word to the church.

Worship leaders of MCCM indicate that there is a right and a wrong way to minister. Sister Marian Fynn says, “the right way is going back to God because he is to be worshipped; and he said worship is the food that he eats. So you must go back to your Father and ask him.” (Personal communication, January 13, 2021). In the interview, I seek further clarification on the statement she makes:

T: When you say it's the food that He eats, is it a scripture or through a prophecy that He said that?

SM: Through a prophecy. (*she laughs*)

T: That worship is the food that He eats?

SM: Yes. So you must go to Him, 'Daddy, today it's worship, so through your Spirit, just direct me [as to] what you want.' And sometimes, He'll drop, maybe, 'my greatness' or 'exalt me' or 'praise me.' So you'll see that the songs will be coming, following each other. That is how God has been ... the Holy Spirit has been dealing with me.

The statements made by Sister Marian suggest that there is individualism in how people are 'led' to minister in song, even though certain similarities exist. Sister Grace Hinson describes her process in this manner:

When you pray and you have that conviction that your spirit is full, you are saturated, you are at a certain level that you know you can flow, you see. So if you have it that way, I pray fervently, then I start selecting the songs, and usually, I like my worship to be like a story, like you are talking to God. (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

Similar to the other worship leader's process, the selection of songs is often thematic, expressing on important idea. Sister Grace continues:

Maybe the worship can be about the greatness of God, so all the songs will talk about his greatness. Maybe you want to thank him, all the songs will be about thanksgiving, all the songs will be about maybe worshipping, all the songs will be about praising

him. It depends on the theme that you will have and also the scripture you want to stand on to do the worship. (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

From the above, it is apparent that a theme based on a scriptural passage usually forms the foundation for the selection of the series of songs to be used in the worship.

Selection of songs for worship

Proceeding from the spiritual preparation, worship leaders go on to the musical aspect of their work which begins with the selection of the series of songs for the worship segment. The choice of songs is based on the worship leader's selected theme from scripture.

The songs to be used can come through dreams, as one worship leader shares of her experience, or "it may be dropped in [her] spirit" (M. Fynn, personal communication, January 13, 2021). Sister Grace describes what she does after making a list of songs. She states that:

... and then I start singing. So when I'm singing, it has to flow. So whilst I'm singing, I don't know how to say it, but the Holy Spirit himself will ... you see, it has to flow. So you get songs that should flow. It should, it should ascend, so you start low and you'd be going up. (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021)

I gather that the idea of "starting low" and "going up" is not in a musical sense, but rather spiritual. In ministration, it is a sense of gradually building up 'spiritual momentum' to a level of being deeply immersed in the spirit, or a sense of heightened spiritual 'energy' to bask in the 'anointing' (unction) and carry

the congregation along into the divine presence. The ability to achieve this through music comes with time and through a lot of practice, the worship leader indicates. Experience comes through learning from one's mistakes, as well as determination on the part of the novice worship leader.

Musically also, the songs should 'flow'. The worship leaders point out that care must be taken in the choice of songs. First of all, it must be noted that not all slow songs are worship songs. Secondly, one has to ensure that all the songs are in the same 'tempo' (meaning: 'time signature'). Sister Grace states emphatically that, "you can't mix the tempos, or else it will mess up the worship" (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

It is important to mention at this point that most of those in music leadership and those who minister in songs in MCCM are not formally trained musically, hence the need for the clarification of their terminology. Their lack of training, which the interviewed persons acknowledge, however, does not prevent them from playing their roles, for as Kraeuter (2007) points out, "musical training is not the foremost criteria for being a worship leader. It is only one of several major considerations" (p. 37). The other factors for consideration include clarity of one's divine call, recognition and appointment by one's church, and having organizational, planning and interpersonal skills (Kraeuter, 2007, p. 37).

Choir Directing

Preparation for the choir leader is similar to that of the worship leaders, although the choirs render special music in limited time unlike the worship segment which lasts between 15 and 30 minutes. The Youth Choir and the Senior

Choir minister in each service, and this is always special music, mostly contemporary music and occasionally classical.

The Youth Choir leader (Choirmistress), Sister Gloria Sackey, explains her process of preparation:

What I do is this. Before I prepare the choir, I pray. Sometimes I even fast about it. So when I fast and pray, then I meet the choir.

The choir will also pray. After the prayers, we start the rehearsal.

(G. Sackey, personal communication, February 16, 2021).

The choir leader attaches great importance to the spiritual exercise of prayer, fasting and the study of the Bible. She further states:

I think that I am doing the work for the Lord and I have to do it with all seriousness. And I also have to make sure that I do other things that the choristers are unaware of – fasting and prayers – for the choir to be firmly established. Because if you decide to rely only on the choir's prayers, you cannot go far. So fasting, I do it behind the scenes. (G. Sackey, personal communication, February 16, 2021)

Fasting is so crucial to the choir leader to the extent that even though she has a medical condition which ordinarily prevents her from fasting, she has devised a way to fast. She drinks a blend of leafy vegetables in mornings at dawn, and this enables her to engage in some form of fasting. She continues her narration:

If I drink it, it helps me to fast because if I don't do that, what we're engaged in is spiritual. If you're unable to do this, it will be a problem. So I fast periodically, with prayer, and Bible

studies. So spiritually, this plays a part. (G. Sackey, personal communication, February 16, 2021)

The music leaders are aware of the spiritual dimension of their work and they strive to be in tune with God to achieve the expected results for the benefit of the believers (congregation). As Pastor Wallace stated, “if you are not tuned in the spirit, you can’t give right songs” (O. Wallace, personal communication, October 8, 2020). Thus, the choice of songs for a specific occasion is dependent on the leader’s union with the Holy Spirit through their personal devotion.

The choristers and bandsmen also engage in prayer and fasting as members of the church community. Rehearsals begin with prayer sessions and are followed by Bible studies led by the choir leader or any other members in leadership of the choir. Aside the church’s standard fasting programme – the 3-day fast every fortnight – the Senior Choir is required to do a day’s fast every fortnight on a rehearsal day. Those interviewed indicate that this practice began through instruction via prophetic word. As part of the Youth Fellowship, the Youth Choir, engages in other fasts organized by the youth during their revivals, - 14-day fast, 21-day fast, and so on. The prayers of the choirs are intercessory – for the nation, negative revelations, the ministry and for the choirs and music ministry. It almost always includes a prayer for ‘anointing’ to minister in songs to bring about deliverance and healing, as well as other benefits to the congregants.

Clap offerings in MCCM are done ‘unto the Lord’, and not for the choir or musical groups or any individual who plays a role in the services including ‘preachermen.’ There is therefore a general awareness that as choir or worship

leaders, choristers and bandsmen, their ministry is ‘unto the Lord’, first and foremost.

Planning versus spontaneity

To a large extent, the worship leaders plan what to sing by listing and rehearsing the songs with the team to ensure that the chosen songs follow each other systematically to tell a story; that they are in the same ‘time’ rhythmically, and that the songs can be sung in the same key without any hitches.

However, a worship leader must always stand in readiness to perform his or her duty anytime he/she is called upon to do so. On such occasions that call for spontaneous worship without prior notice, the worship leaders still ‘tune in’ by offering a brief word of prayer asking for direction for the worship to be Spirit-led.

In MCCM, worship songs are largely made up of well-known choruses in English, Ga, and Akan. Most of the worship songs are easy to sing and the congregation is able to sing along, and the Worship Team can support the worship leader without prior rehearsal in such instances. The instrumentalists are also able to support because most of them play by ear.

Choir leaders also plan but they gauge the atmosphere during the service and sometimes, they change their choice of song for the service. The Youth Choir leader explains that, “when we come to church, we look at the atmosphere”, and she gives further explanation:

... for example, maybe the way the worship was done, the atmosphere created through the worship, in that case we drop the prepared song so as not to ‘dampen’ the spirit of the congregation or bring low the spirit of the worshippers. So we have to change

the song immediately and sing a song that will continue to sustain and lift the spirit of the congregation. (G. Sackey, personal communication, February 16, 2021).

Regarding spontaneous worship also, worship leaders have to stay in tune at all times because they do not know when they will be called to lead. A sensitivity to the Spirit is a key requirement to function in such instances. A prompting to prepare ought to be heeded with the needed urgency and any worship leader should be ready to step up in the absence of the person scheduled to lead. Sister Marian Fynn recounts an instance that occurred:

... for instance, this retreat, it was not my turn to do the worship, but when I came and sat down I sensed within me that I should prepare. When I go and nobody is there I should take over. So I started and I said, “Holy Spirit, lead me” and then the songs started coming and I started putting them on paper. (M. Fynn, personal communication, January 13, 2021).

In continuing the story, Sister Marian said that in the end, she had to lead the worship when they mounted the stage because there was no one to lead. This signified that what she sensed earlier was a prompting of the Holy Spirit.

The members of the Worship Team play a supportive role. They are expected to go along with the leader in unity of spirit. The worship leaders indicate that in their prayers, they ask for ‘corporate anointing’ for the team members to follow and flow with the one leading. They pray for the Holy Spirit to pull the team along to follow the leader so that together they can usher the rest of the congregation into the presence of God.

Singing in the Spirit

The MCCM Pentecostals generally seem to be comfortable with the range of music styles used in the church's worship. The participants do not indicate any marked musical preferences. However, they emphasise the importance of the manner in which the music is ministered.

A key requirement for anyone who ministers in song, they say, is that the singing has to be done in the Spirit. What really does it mean to sing in the Spirit? Some of the church and music leaders explain the concept:

- a. Singing in the Spirit simply means that one, doing it from the bottom of your heart, and then with your mind following everything you are singing. That is being in the spirit. (G. Yalley, personal communication, October 27, 2020).
- b. ... the meaning is, you want to focus on the words of the song; you focus and meditate at the same time so that you will have a link with the Lord. (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).
- c. Singing in the Spirit, to me, is, let your heart and your mind follow the words of the song (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

The church leaders interviewed explain that there is a difference between 'singing unto people' and 'singing unto God.' Their explanation is based on scripture, that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8, NKJV). Therefore, their singing is not to please man or to entertain. The motive is to please God, and therefore it has to be done in the Spirit with sincerity of heart. Failure to sing in the Spirit would mean honouring God with one's lips while the heart is far from God (Mark 7:6b).

Concentration and meditation on the words of a song while ministering “quickens the Holy Spirit” and God ‘descends into the midst of his people to do what he wants to do for them” (G. Yalley, personal communication, October 27, 2020). No matter the type of song, or its tempo, singing in the Spirit is a must for the MCCM Pentecostals. Acknowledging their human shortcomings, however, the MCCM Pentecostals speak of their reliance on the Holy Spirit to enable them to offer ministration that pleases God. They also acknowledge the sovereignty of God to work in their midst even when they are unable to sing in the Spirit as they desire.

It appears that the ultimate acceptable result of ministering in song and /or leading worship is to touch the heart of God. In some ways, worship has become a routine activity within Pentecostal services, but as Kwapong (2012) points out, “it is possible to go through these motions time after time and never ‘touch’ God’s heart” (p. xiv). One of the worship leaders who is also a chorister talks about wanting “to touch God’s heart so that [she] will feel his presence” (M. Fynn, personal communication, January 13, 2021).

The ability to touch God’s heart stems from the singer or musician’s personal relationship with the Lord built over time since worship is supposed to be a lifestyle cultivated through one’s personal devotional time. Kwapong (2012) states:

A lifestyle of worship means worshiping God everywhere.... The only way it becomes possible to make worship a lifestyle is through conducting all the affairs of our lives in the spirit of true worship and maintaining the attitude of worship wherever we may be (p. 116).

In MCCM, one observes that worshippers are privileged at times to hear through prophetic word that their worship or song ministration has touched God's heart or ascended to him. Oftentimes, the singers or musicians do not actually know how it happens, but the prophetic word gives them insight into what has transpired spiritually, that they have touched the heart of God. When this kind of revelation comes, it is often accompanied with benefits for those who ministered and the congregants as well.

Apart from the worship segment, time is allotted for extended song ministration especially during revivals and retreats. This occurs after the sermon and the altar call. Various choirs, including those from the branches, are called to minister one after the other. This session is likened to a period for 'waiting on the Lord.' In these sessions, the congregation waits in expectation to hear from the Lord and the MCCM Pentecostals attest to the fact that they do indeed receive messages from the Lord. They have observed that even though 'God comes in' at any point in services, this period of song ministration is special. It also happens that there are times when God doesn't come to 'talk' with them, but the words of the songs do minister to the congregation and they believe God has moved spiritually.

Oftentimes, the congregation is admonished to 'remain in the Spirit' all through the service and during the song ministration sessions, because the move of the Holy Spirit is expected. The congregation reacts to the music as they are moved. In certain cases, they would sit quietly, or some members would stand up with hands raised, singing along, and some may move forward and kneel in front of the stage. The reactions vary and are unpredictable, but the congregation

is expressive in their reactions to the different songs raised by the music groups or individuals.

The Saturday morning devotions includes a special segment after the initial long prayer. In this case, individuals from the congregation are called to minister in songs. Each song is followed with commentary by a selected pastor. One observes that the MCCM Pentecostals spend a great deal of time in their services for music. They believe that music has an impact on the prophetic ministry in the church. They indicate that at times, a song ministered in the Spirit is able to attract God's presence in a manner that brings down God's mercy and intervention in the lives of certain individuals and even the church as a whole.

A Sample of Worship

An example of worship during a Sunday service (8th September, 2019) is presented below. After the Sunday morning Bible Study, the service began at 8:00am with a brief period of prayer – thanksgiving to God, confession of sins, pleading of the blood of Jesus to cover the entire auditorium, asking the Spirit of the Lord to take complete control of the service, etc. The first lesson was read from I Kings 18: 36 – 40, after which there was worship led by a brother.

The worship included nine songs which can be broken into three sections. It began with the first three choruses in free style (Section I), and continued with three more songs in time (Section II), and ended with three hymns in free style (Section III). Section I consisted of these choruses in Twi:

Song 1:

Monna Nyame ase daa,

Wɔ wiase aman nyinaa.

Osomaa ne Ba kor no

Beyii yen awereho.

[Translation]

Give thanks to the Lord always

In all the earth;

He sent His only begotten Son

To take away our grief.

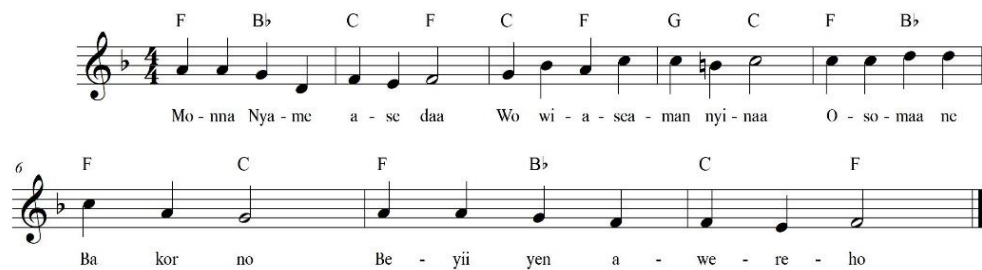


Figure 9: Song 1 – Monna Nyame ase daa.

Song 2:

Wo ne Nyame a, wo ma yedi yie,

Wo ne Nyame a, wo ne yen ko ba daa,

Yeda w'ase a, ennsa da o!

Yeyi w'aye a, ennsa da o!

[Translation]

You are the Lord who ensures our wellbeing.

You are the Lord who watches over us as we go out and come in.

We give you thanks, endlessly!

We praise you, endlessly!

Wo ne Nya-mea wo ma ye di yie Wo ne Nya-mea wo ne yen ko ba daa

Ye da woa - sea enn - sa daoo Ye-yi woa - yea enn - sa daoo

Ye-da woa - sea enn - sa daoo Ye-yi woa - yea enn - sa daoo

Figure 10: Song 2 – Wo ne Nyame a wo ma yedi yie

Song 3:

Yeda W'ase a, efata.

Yeyi W'aye a, efata.

Woayi yen efi owu m'

Woama yen nkwa a eni ewiee

Enti, yeda W'ase a, efata.

[Translation]

You are worthy of thanks,

You are worthy of praise.

You have delivered us from death,

You have given us eternal life.

Therefore, you are worthy of thanks.

Ye-da W'a - sea e - fa - ta Ye-yi W'a - yea e - fa - ta Woa-yi yena-fi o -

wum' Woa - ma yen nkwaac-nnic - wicc En - ti yc - da W'a - sca c - fa - ta

Figure 11: Song 3 – Yeda W'ase a, efata

These initial songs focused on thanksgiving to God for sending His only begotten Son, for deliverance from death, for granting the believers eternal life, for ensuring the believers' wellbeing, and for daily protection. The worship leader led the congregation to express their gratitude for the manifold blessings they had received from the Lord. The free rhythm and the slow pace of the music enabled the worshippers to be in a contemplative and reflective mood.

Section II of the worship was made up of songs with strict rhythmic accompaniment enabling the worshippers to dance moving to the left and right in rhythm. In this section, the worshippers were led to affirm their allegiance to the Most High by declaring that they will worship Him alone, because there is no god beside Him, the Ancient of Days. The songs were:

Song 4:

Tete Nyame ei, yebesom wo.

Tete Nyame ei, yebesom wo.

Se yegyaa woakyi a, obiara nni ho,

Tete Nyame ei, yebesom wo.

[Translation]

Ancient of Days, we will worship you.

Ancient of Days, we will worship you.

Besides you, there is none other,

Ancient of Days, we will worship you.

Te-te Nya-meei ye-be-som wo Te-te Nya-meei ye-be-som wo Se ye-gyaa woa-

kyia o-bia-ra nni ho Te-te Nya-meei ye-be-som wo Se ye-gyaa woa-kyia, o-bia-ra nni

ho Te - te Nya - meei ye - be - som wo.

Figure 12: Song 4 – Tete Nyame

Song 5:

Wo ye tete, tete, tete Nyame

Wo ye tete, tete, tete Nyame

Yebeyi w'aye na yɛama wo din no so

Efiri se wo ye tete Nyame.

[Translation]

You are the Ancient, Ancient, Ancient of Days.

You are the Ancient, Ancient, Ancient of Days.

We will praise you and lift your name on high,

Because you are the Ancient of Days.

Wo - ye te-te te-te te-te Nya - me Wo - ye te-te te-te

te-te Nya-me Ye-be - yi w'a - ye na yea - ma wo din no so E-firi se wo ye te-te Nya - me

Figure 13: Song 5 – Wo ye tete Nyame

The worship leader continued to lead the congregation to declare that God is the everlasting one who's beginning no one knows, and who can only be described as the Ancient of Days. They will therefore praise Him because of who He is,

and they will uplift His mane. The same theme is seen in the next song. Here again, they declare that God is unchanging – the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Song 6:

Ancient of Days,

As old as you are,

As old as you are,

You remain the same.

Figure 14 shows the musical score for Song 6, "Ancient of Days." The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1-5 with lyrics "An-cient of Days, as old as you are" and chords F, Bb/C, F, F, Bb, Gm. The second staff contains measures 6-11 with lyrics "You re-main the same. An-cient of Days, as old as you are" and chords F/C, F/C, Dm, Gm, C, C, C7, F, F7. The third staff contains measures 12-15 with lyrics "as old as you are You re-main the saame." and chords Bb, Gm, F/C, F/C, C7, F.

Figure 14: Song 6 - Ancient of Days

After Section II, which is the “rhythmic” section, the worship leader raised three hymns in succession - “Praise to the Holiest in the heights”, “Great is thy faithfulness”, and “How great thou art!”

Song 7:

Praise to the Holiest in the heights

And in the depths be praise

In all His works most wonderful,

Most sure in all His ways.

Song 8:

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my father

There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not,
As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

(Refrain)

Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hands hath provided
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

Song 9:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour, God to Thee
How great thou art, How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour, God to Thee
How great thou art, How great thou art!

After singing about how wonderful God's works are, the worshippers moved on to affirm the faithfulness of God. The reason is that He has provided all they ever needed. To crown it all, each soul made a declaration by singing to the Lord "How great thou art!" The greatness of God is thus the theme that concluded this worship segment.

The worship segment usually follows the structure above although different songs may be used as the worship leader deems fit.

Chapter Summary

Over the years, the MCCM Pentecostals have come to the conclusion that music plays an important role in their worship, particularly in enabling the Vessels to have a deep communion with the divine. Those in music leadership stress the need for a lifestyle of personal devotion, piety and spiritual discipline

in preparation towards music ministration. The spiritual dimension of musical practice is thus emphasized. Music is planned with allowance for spontaneity during worship services. Singing is expected to be done in the Spirit, meaning a total involvement of body, mind and spirit. The ministry of music is directed towards the divine and it is meant to ascend and touch the heart of the divine.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MUSIC AND PROPHETISM: COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES

Introduction

This chapter focuses on prophetism as it relates to music and the collective musical experiences of the MCCM congregation. The church is shaped largely by the sermons that are preached and also by the prophecies/revelations that emerge in its services. To understand the basis for the musical behaviour of this Pentecostal/charismatic community, a study of the prophecies/revelations related to music is essential. I begin with an examination of the content of prophecies/revelations which form the basis of musical thought and practice in MCCM

Prophecies Concerning Music

Prophecies are given in the first-person (i.e. God speaks directly to the congregation) while revelations are usually preceded by “The Lord says...”. More often than not, prophecies are spoken in Ga, and translated into English and Akan. The church keeps transcripts of the English interpretations of all prophecies/revelations.

The following are excerpts from prophecies captured in the church’s transcripts of prophecies and revelations. These prophecies give insight on music and musical performance within MCCM. They deal with permissible music, the appropriate conduct for music makers, integrity in ‘musical service’, the benefits of serving in the music ministry, liberation through music, as well as worship and manifestation of divine presence. The other excerpts highlight divine healing through music, music in personal devotion, and assurance of divine interventions in believers’ lives.

Permissible music

The first is an excerpt of the prophecy given through Sister Anowa Aikins, on Sunday, 2nd September, 2018. The opening section of the prophecy points to the importance of divine authority in the affairs of the ministry, shaping it according to a divine plan and a divine purpose. The church is not supposed to “conform to the world” but rather focus on eternal goals and aspirations. The one who strives to “walk aright” treads on the “narrow way” and the world will view that individual as not enlightened. The emphasis is made that earthly gains are insignificant, and what is important is one’s destination after death (Mark 8:36). The prophecy is as follows:

“[...] I won’t let this church be an ordinary church. The way the Israelites were and I turned them to be a nation that I wanted, that is how I have made this Ministry. When people outside look at you and say you are not enlightened, it is rather they who are not enlightened, because that is how they will see you because you are treading on my path and anyone who walks aright with me, it is the narrow way you walk on. If you have everything, when you die, where you go to is what is important.

The prophecy continues:

In many of my Ministries they have changed things and they go as they please because they want people to see they have big Ministries and just a few amongst the lot are those who love me and are walking aright with me.

The reference to “my ministries” indicates that some ministries are of divine origin, yet have deviated from divine direction in order to attain physical

prosperity. Those following godly precepts are few. This portion of the prophecy sets the tone for what follows:

I will not allow certain things in this Ministry. If the Youth organize something like a concert, such as “Ayeyi”, the Church will allow it and it will be performed. However, I won’t allow people to come here and play rock and dance and say it is for the purpose of drawing souls here. They will play the rock to attract the Youth because that is what they want. Who draws souls? Who knows their minds and who knows their hearts? If they play the rock and dance and they don’t live aright with me, when they die, where will they go?

“Ayeyi” is a recently instituted annual concert by the Youth Choir of MCCM, an activity which is endorsed by the church. However, the prophecy shows that some musical genres and dance forms are inappropriate for worship, and their use as a means to proselytize the youth cannot achieve that purpose since the conviction of souls and conversion is solely the work of the Holy Spirit. The statement therefore prohibits the church from using certain musical styles and dance forms in its worship. Again, emphasis is placed on the need for righteousness as a means to reach the believer’s desired eternal destination. The prophecy continues further:

The way I want it, is the way I will go. With my eyes, I will look at everything. With my ears, I hear everything. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah did things that displeased me, I came down from heaven to see it and saw it was true and I passed my judgement,

so as I speak, I say, the way I want it, I will cause the Ministry to tread that way [...] (Church Transcript, September 2, 2018)

In the prophecy, the Lord is insistent that the ministry shall be divinely directed and the church cannot deviate from his instructions because of his presence there. The church is alerted that the Lord is critically observing – visually and aurally – the activities of the church as it was in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20-21).

Appropriate conduct for music makers

The next prophecy was given through Sister Mavis Gyan to the Worship Team on Sunday, 13th May, 2018. The prophecy addresses hindrances to acceptable worship; that interpersonal relations between members of the group affects the outcome of the music ministration. It is clear that worship must “ascend” to God for divine purposes to be achieved, the purpose which is to meet the needs of the worshippers (i.e., the congregation).

Therefore, the state of the hearts of the individual members of the team is so crucial. Anger and bitterness in the individual performers hinders the divine purpose. Interpersonal conflicts must therefore be resolved prior to ministration to ensure the effectiveness of worship. The prophecy also highlights the need for the team members to perform their task of singing in unity as one unit. Through their duty of rendering worship, they can then have access to divine protection. The fullness of the divine protection is gained when one’s character meets divine approval.

The prophecy began with a couple of questions to the Worship Team which were answered by the leader of the team after which the Lord through the Vessel addressed the group as follows:

Sister [Grace Hinson], what is your name? (Answer: Worship Team). So at all times, you have to come before me as a Team. And when you come and stand there, what do you do? (Answer: We worship). With many of you, I, the Lord, am not pleased with the way you relate to each other. You easily get angry with each other. Somebody will speak and speak anyhow. Someone won't speak but within him/her, there is bitterness and darkness. When you come before me as Worship Team, many at times, your worship does not ascend unto me. When I want to go through you to work for my children, I don't get you the way I want. I work because I want to do it for the person, but you don't benefit. I am not pleased with the heart with which you come before me. Many at times, if half of you have good hearts for me and the other half doesn't have good hearts for me, in my presence, you are not a team. You can't be a team for me. The way you speak, you speak angrily. Why is it that when somebody wrongs you, you do not draw close to the person, in humility, so that you will be complete before me, the Lord? If I see you as a team as you stand, it is not so in your hearts. Some of you do not talk to each other. Somebody says because of the other person's character, he/she cannot be fine with the other person. So, if the person asks a question, it is "hmm", or "aah", and you want me to come into your lives? Do you know why I have selected you? The enemy has already selected you and I have also selected you from his hands so that you will be one Team unto me. So, at all times that

you render worship unto me, the Lord, I hide you under my wings, but you are there and the enemy is dealing with you as he pleases. (Church Transcript, May 13, 2018).

In this prophecy, the Lord through the Vessel elicits a response from the Worship Team concerning the word given to them. The leader answers by first thanking God for showing the team their shortcomings, and then pledges that they will make the effort to adhere to the instructions of the Lord to ensure that souls are delivered as the Lord wishes. The prophecy continues:

I want you to tell me, the Lord, something. (Response: Lord, this morning we thank you because you have caused us to see where we are failing. So, we shall strive hard to go the way You want so that Your work goes on, so that the souls you want to deliver, you deliver them.) (Church Transcript, May 13, 2018).

The prophecy then continues with an assurance from the Lord that if the team complies with his directives, they will receive answers to their individual requests. Referencing the biblical story of the breaking down of the walls of Jericho through praises, the Lord indicates that if that feat was achieved through nothing else but praises, then members of the Worship Team do not need to request for anything from the Lord because the Lord would automatically meet their needs as they serve him. As they serve wholeheartedly, they will receive rewards even as they sleep. In short, their rewards are tied to how efficiently they serve. It is through the execution of the assignment given them that they will be rewarded. If they harbour anger and bitterness, no amount of prayer and fasting will enable them to receive the blessings of God and the answers to their prayer requests. The following are the actual words of the prophecy:

If you even look at me, for my sake, and you say within your mind that because of the Lord, I will ignore your actions and let go in your heart, you the one who did that, I will have mercy on you and the one who wronged you, I will speak to his/her mind and heart and at all times you will be complete before me, the Lord. Strive hard to please me in worship and when you start, you will see that what you are yearning for and you are not getting, you will get it.

If I caused the people of Israel to break down the walls of Jericho through praises, then you, as Worship Team, should not ask me for anything. When I see it is fitting for you, I should give it to you. When you lie down to sleep, by the time you wake up, you have it. But each of you, as you stand, has a request for which you are praying fervently as if you are demanding the payment of a debt. The work I have entrusted into your hands is what will reward you in all your needs. So, if you harbour anger and bitterness in you, you will fast and pray and you will be tired (Church Transcript, May 13, 2018).

In the final part of this prophecy, the Lord through the Vessel then cautions the group that if they are obedient to his instructions, and ensure they work at all times with free hearts, he would accomplish great things through them. If not, he would constitute another group under a new name – a group made up of newly selected members - to do the work of lifting up worship to the Lord. The current Worship Team members are to bear in mind that in the future each of them

would have to render an account on their God-given assignment. The exact words are as follows:

If what I have come to do with you today, you will be obedient onto me, the Lord, and you won't forget today and at all times you will have free hearts for me, the Lord, you will see what I will do through you. But if you don't do that, then from amongst you, I will select some people and add some other people to them and give them a different name and they will do the work you are doing. I have not taken the work from you but in future, I will ask you to render account for it (Church Transcript, May 13, 2018).

Integrity in 'musical service'

Similar to the prophecy above is this next prophecy also to the Worship Team on 19th November, 2018. In the prophecy, the Lord through the Vessel reiterates the fact that he has selected different people to serve in various groups in the church including the choir, and likewise the members of the Worship Team have also been selected. The Lord speaks of one of the functions of the Worship Team which is to raise songs as the Lord ministers through his chosen Vessels in the prophetic ministry. The songs raised, the Lord indicates, are meant to sustain the Vessel throughout the period that the Lord is working through him/her.

The Lord seeks on that evening, to fulfil some of the desires on the hearts of the members of the group, individually. Yet, the Lord knows that if he does these for them, some of them will destroy what has been done for them through anger, rancour and shouting. So the Lord cautions them to walk with dignity and integrity in the positions assigned them, and if they do so, they will lack nothing

good. They are cautioned to be of good character and refrain from all actions that displease the Lord. The negative characters some of them exhibit are that which is drawing them back. In spite of all these, the Lord has mercy on them and emphasizes the need for them to respect and honour the positions they have been given.

Again, the Lord cautions that if they do not take heed to his instruction, he will re-select and create another group to do the work in their place. The members of the Worship Team are therefore cautioned to be careful that no evil communication emanates from them, rather, only words that are beneficial to others, and if they do, they would receive their hearts' desires. The exact words of the prophecy are as follows:

I am asking you, this evening, how do you see yourselves before me, the Lord? Don't you see that among my workers, I have selected and reselected and in the same way, in this Ministry, in the choir, I have selected people and selected you also? If I, the Lord, will use my vessel to work, I call you to sing and the songs that come from you sustains the vessel throughout the period of my work.

This evening, it is my desire that what is upon your heart, I, the Lord, will do them for you one by one but I, myself, know that when I do it for you, some of you, with anger and rancor and shouting will destroy it. Where I have positioned you, you should give honour and respect to you, yourselves, with regard to where I have positioned you and you will see that you will not lack anything.

With some of you, your characters are not pleasing to me. I, the Lord, have called you but I am expecting you to change and with some of you, also, the right characters are not in you – because this person is doing it, I will also do it. Your characters are drawing you back.

[...] I should have mercy on you. So I have had mercy on you but I want you to respect and honour the position I have placed you or else, a time will come if I don't get you the way I want you, I will re-select. You will be there but I will select another group. I have prepared you for the work, so let respect be on you. Don't let any evil communication proceed from your mouth. Words that won't benefit human beings or yourselves, so that I will perform the desires of your hearts for you [...] (Church Transcript, 19th November, 2018)

Reaping the benefits of musical service

The next revelation was through a word of knowledge by Sister Georgina Peters on 19th April, 2019. The 'word' came after a branch choir had ministered in a song entitled "We have come this far by faith." The Lord indicated that the song they ministered is for the group itself. In other words, the message of the song is for them. If it is so, that they have indeed come this far by faith, then they should be careful how they live or else they will not enjoy God's blessings. Others will rather enjoy those blessings. But that is not the plan of God. The Lord's desire is that as he passes through the choristers for other members of the congregation to benefit, the choristers also should reap the benefits of their ministration. They are thus cautioned by the Lord to live their lives according to

the word of God and eschew all forms of evil. This revelation given through Sister Georgina Peters was recorded as follows:

The Lord says your song ministration says “We have come this far by faith”. The Lord says you have sung but the song you sang is for you yourselves. The Lord says if it is so, then be very careful how you live, or else, the song you sang that you have come this far by faith, you will be there and other people will come in your stead and have the blessing and you will just be as you are but He says that is not what He has planned. He desires that as He passes through you and people benefit, you should also benefit. So be careful to live aright. Ensure that whatever is not in line with the word of God, you move away from it (Church Transcript, 19th April, 2019).

Liberation through music

In the next example which is a prophecy given through Sis Anowa Aikins on Sunday, 1st October, 2017, a brother is ‘loosened’ spiritually through a song. The Lord through the Vessel engaged the brother in a conversation. The brother admitted to not having peace, although it is not clear the reason for his lack of peace. A sister, Grace Hinson, is then directed to minister in a short song through which the Lord would ‘loosen’ the brother – to bring about deliverance. The brother is instructed to raise his hands while the song was going on. After the song ministration, the Lord through the Vessel indicated that the brother had been ‘loosened’. Further instructions were then given to the brother. He was asked to strive to live a godly life or risk being destroyed by the enemy (i.e., the devil). The following dialogue ensued:

The Lord: *(To a brother)* Do you want peace?

Brother: Yes, please.

The Lord: Do you know you don't have peace?

Brother: Yes, please. I know.

The Lord: I will loosen you this morning. Where you are standing, lift up your hands.

The Lord: *(To a sister)*. Sister ..., sing a song. Sing it short and I will, through that, loosen him. *(Sister sings)*

The Lord: *(To the brother)* I have loosened you. Where you were standing and you know it was not good and I have delivered you from there, don't go there again. This morning, I am causing my grace to abound on you. The strength I have to give you, I am giving it to you, this morning. Don't look at me, physically, this way but look at me that I, the Lord, I am supreme and I rule everywhere. All power is in my hands and that strength and grace, I have given it to you, today. I have changed your character for you, today, so live for me. If you go back to where you used to be again, the enemy has no respect for anybody. He will destroy you. You will see that you are a human being but you are useless. Today, you have seen me. That is enough for you. Remain in my peace. (Church Transcript, October 1, 2017)

Worship and divine manifestation

The example that follows is an excerpt from a prophecy given through Sis Anowa Aikins on Sunday, 18th March, 2018. An invitation is given to the Greater Accra branches of MCCM to convene on two days. The important idea

expressed in this excerpt is the fact that when the church meets, the Lord moves tremendously through the worship and praises without the need for a physical manifestation of the Spirit of God through prophecies/revelations. This is captured in these words of the prophecy: “. If you come and I have to reveal myself to you, I will do so. If you have to worship me and praise me, you will do that because in all these, I move and move wonderfully” (Church Transcript, March 18, 2018). Thus, the church is directed to carry out its liturgy as planned and leave the rest to the Lord. The Spirit of God makes the divine decision to reveal or not to reveal himself in a service through prophetic activity. The MCCM congregation seems to understand these dynamics very well.

The same prophecy draws attention to the fact that when worship is done fervently from the heart, it brings about the physical manifestation of divine presence in these words: “If you worship me this way with your heart, why wouldn’t I cause you to see me? Why wouldn’t I cause you to hear my voice? Here I am. I, the Lord, I have come into your midst” (Church Transcript, March 18, 2018). When there is such a manifestation, the individual worshippers reap divine benefits of well-being both physically and spiritually. In addition, the machinations of the adversary (i.e., the devil) are also thwarted. The exact words from the prophecy are:

Here I am. I, the Lord, I have come into your midst. I have come into your midst. The Lord of authority, I have come. I, the one who reveals the works of the enemy and destroys them. I am the one who tricks the enemy and puts him to shame. Here I am....
This morning, I will move and move in your midst. You will be sitting there and I will deliver you. You will be sitting there and

I, the Lord will heal you. You will be sitting there and I, the Lord will loosen you [...]. (Church Transcript, March 18, 2018).

Divine healing through music

In a prophecy given through Sister Mavis Gyan on Monday, 19th November, 2018, the Lord discloses the infirmities he had worked on through the song ministration. They include issues with reproductive organs, and infertility in men. The prophecy states: “As the song ministration went on, with some of you I touched the reproductive organs.” It continues: “Men, whose capacity of bringing forth have become a problem, this evening, through the song ministration, I, the Lord, have touched them.” The men concerned are given the following assurance: “I, the Lord, am affirming it to you that they will bring forth because as the song ministration went on, I touched them and that is it” (Church Transcript).

In addition, in the prophecy, those who were supposed to undergo surgical procedures were also touched ahead of the surgeries and were assured that they would return with solutions to their reproductive health problems. No persons were called out individually. Rather, it was a general statement meant for all who found themselves in those categories. For a sister, the Lord caused a cessation of bleeding through this statement: “There is a sister here who is bleeding. This evening, I, the Lord, am telling her, I have touched her. I, myself, have touched her and she has received complete healing.” Thus, by means of prophecy, the congregation is made aware of the divine accomplishments through a specific song ministration.

Music as a gift for personal devotion

In the next excerpt, a song is given as a gift to the Head Pastor to use as a prayer. If the song is used that way, the Lord will grant him numerous spiritual gifts. If he is steadfast in faith, he will receive divine affirmation in all his endeavours. This was from a prophecy given through Sister Mavis Gyan on 28th December, 2018. The exact words are as follows:

(To the Head Pastor) The song that flowed through you is a prayer that I, the Lord, have gifted you and if you will stand on this song to pray, I, the Lord, will gift you a lot in the spirit and if you stand in my faith, I, the Lord, will give you a backing. This is my word to you. *(Song: He rolled back the waters of the mighty Red Sea).*

Assurance of divine intervention in believers' lives

In the prophecy of 10th February, 2019, the Lord instructs a branch choir to minister, and he indicates what he would do through the song ministration. The congregants are to affirm the belief that they would be leaving the church auditorium in better conditions than they came with into the service. He would instil the spirit of joy and of hope in them. They should go assured of his presence with them. He then bestows his blessing on them and grants them their needs. The words of the prophecy are:

[...] This morning, I am with you because you are not done with me yet. Let the Tema [branch] Choir come and minister in song. As this song ministration goes on, believe in your heart that the way you were and came today, you will never go back the same way. I am putting into you the spirit of joy. I am giving you the spirit of hope because I, the Lord, I am with you. Because of that

don't shake. I am accompanying you and if I am walking with you, what or who should you be afraid of? This morning, don't fear them again because I, the Lord, I am telling you, I am with you. I am with you and I will take hold of you. Even if the distance between you and what you want is great, I, the Lord, will bring you close to it. This morning, I have filled you to the brim with my blessing and for your needs, in your worship and thanksgiving, I am rendering them unto you. I am still with you. [Church Transcript, 10th February, 2019].

In what follows, other prophetic/revelatory utterances related to music are thematised according to (a) ideas about music, music makers, and music making (b) music-inspired prophecy, (c) benefits of worship, (d) divine accomplishments through music, and (e) divine visitation through music.

Ideas about music, music makers, and music making

Invocation of divine presence

The notion that music invokes the presence of God is expressed in prophetic utterances and this is the belief of the MCCM Pentecostals. In a prophecy given through Sister Mavis Gyan on 4th April, 2019, this notion is explicitly expressed, that it is music that draws the Lord into the midst of his people, and it is captured in this vignette:

Earlier in the service, there had been a brief prophecy through Sister [Grace Hinson] in which the Lord said the Worship was not done properly. He admonished the various [singing] groups to prepare to give a good ministration. After this, the Glorious choir ministered in a long session of highlife choruses and the

entire congregation was up and dancing. Immediately after that, there was prophecy through Sister [Mavis Gyan]. The Lord indicated that He should have come into the service right after the Worship but the worship did not ascend to Him. He asked Sister [Marian] of the Worship Team to repeat the instruction He had given her in time past regarding leading worship. She says the Lord has instructed her to pray fervently prior to leading worship and if she does not feel right in her spirit from home, she should let another person lead the worship. After her response, Sister [Mavis] continued [with the prophecy] and the Lord said that this should be a lesson to the whole group. It is in this prophecy that the Lord said, “It is music that draws me down into your midst” (Field notes, April 4, 2019, Achimota)

The requirement of piety

The lifestyle and conduct of the music makers (i.e., singers, bandsmen) is also prescribed in some prophetic utterances and revelations. It is expected that the music makers live in holiness and purity in order for them to offer acceptable service. In a prophecy given through Sister Mavis Gyan on 1st January, 2016, the bandsmen and the Youth Choir are separately cautioned to serve in holiness. Therefore, musical skill is not the primary requirement for music makers, but rather, a life of purity and reverence for God.

In the prophecy addressed to the bandsmen of the entire MCCM, the Lord establishes the importance of the playing of instruments in his worship, in part, enabling congregants to worship effectively through singing and dancing. He states, “because, if you don’t play these instruments, people cannot dance to

my satisfaction.” The Lord then asks the bandsmen a question, “so how should you yourselves live?” The prophecy continues:

Because of this, you are the people who, first, should live a holy life unto me, the Lord, because if you touch the instruments with your purity and they sound and human beings lift up praise unto me the Lord, then they get their healing. If the choir sings well and you don’t play the instruments well, it doesn’t cause man’s dance to please me, the Lord. You play the instruments and they get their blessing but you don’t get any blessing because you are not living a holy life unto me. Live a holy life unto me and pray that I, the Lord, will make you skilful for the work ... (Church Transcript, January 1, 2016)

Part of the prophecy was addressed to the Youth Choir. Similar to the admonition to the bandsmen, they are also to practise purity. In their case, a promise of a beautiful package is given them. Access to the package is based on honesty and piety which they are to exhibit in their individual lives. This approach to the Youth Choir is for the purpose of training, discipline, and preparation for the future. Their ability to live in purity will ward off the adversary. In the prophecy, they are also blessed with knowledge and understanding. All these benefits are given them because of their musical service through which divine purposes such as deliverances are achieved. The prophecy is recorded thus:

I have put something beautiful on a tray for you and the colours within its brilliance, you can’t tell. This thing is there for you but I am not going to hand it over to you today but the one who will

live aright unto me, the person's truthfulness will lead him/her to go and take it.... If you live a holy life unto me, you will have it.... I have selected you and I want your life to be beautiful because I have marked you. I want it that when you are in the midst of your colleagues, they should notice that these people have Christian training.... This morning, I am blessing you again.... Why am I doing all these for you? Because of my work; so that when you stand and sing and deliverance should come out of it, it should come out of it. (Church Transcript, January 1, 2016)

The state of heart of the music maker

It appears that there is a required state of heart for optimum musical service. That state enables the achievement of divine purposes which results in spiritual benefits for the music maker. This state may perhaps be that of total 'yieldedness' in spirit and complete immersion in the musical activity. In a service on 22nd March, 2019, there was a word from the Lord to the bandsmen through Sister Georgina Peters which said: "Tonight, the Lord says he is pleased with the kind of heart with which they [the bandsmen] played. If they would always play with this kind of heart for His children to benefit, then they would also reap benefits."

Liturgical direction

There are occasions when the details of a service are modified through divine directives. In such cases, the course of the service is restructured. An example of such an instance was made known on 2nd October, 2019. In a word of the Lord given to Sister Georgina Peters a week earlier, the choirs were not

supposed to minister in the service. Rather, individuals from the congregation were to minister with commentary by the Pastors. Unfortunately, this revelation was not given on the said date but a week later when the Vessel apologized to the Lord before the entire congregation for not delivering the word when she received it the week before.

Divine directives are also received concerning services outside regular meeting times. On 10th November, 2019, for example, through Sister Anowa Aikins, the Lord instructed the church to hold an evening service devoted to prayer and praises only. The church complied and dedicated the service to prayer and music only.

Music-inspired prophecy

Prophecies that make direct reference to particular song ministrations or songs, or those that indicate the role of music in the manifestation of divine presence, are what I label as music-inspired. In a prophecy through one of the Vessels on 1st September, 2019, the Lord indicates that he ‘descended’ as a result of the worship, and commends the congregation, the Worship Team and a brother for worshipping Him with all their heart.

During the worship, the worship leader Sister Grace Hinson descended from the stage and moved among the congregation through the aisles. At some point she ran from one end of the front area to the other. Before the worship ended, she returned to the stage and knelt down while singing. As the worship slowed down and came to an end, the band sustained a chord and then a postlude while the worship leader prayed thanking God. She then laid down on the stage. Immediately after this, a brother in the Team took over and raised a transition song, “Here we are, lifting our hands to you.” It was celebratory and the response

was rapturous. The chorus of the song was repeated over and over. At the end, the brother declared, “The King is in the midst of his people. Give him a shout!!” And the congregation responded with a great shout.

The service conductor mounted the stage and exhorted the congregation to give a clap offering to the Lord. Immediately, a Vessel stood up from the congregation speaking in tongues. The Head Pastor asked the congregation to pray and commit the Vessel into the hand of God, and ask him to have his own way. The prophecy was then given as follows:

This morning, from the depths of your hearts you have worshipped me. Just as you sang, I am here. Yes, I am here....
This morning, I have healed and delivered. I want you to know that the worship you gave me ascended to the heavens and it is the reason I have descended into your midst. Worship me this way at all times. (Prophecy, September 1, 2019)

The prophecy addressed the Worship Team with the Lord indicating that he was pleased with them. He admonished them in this manner: “continue to pray so that you can worship me this way at all times.” To the brother, the Lord through the Vessel said:

The love you have for my work, don’t let it go. This morning, you’ve worshipped me with all your hart. I am not telling you this for you to be swollen-headed. I love you and I’ll do great things for you ... Humble yourself ... I am blessing you. Live for me ... ensure that you’ll remain in me at all times (Prophecy, September 1, 2019)

There are other instances where references have been made to songs or song ministrations. At the beginning of a prophecy on 10th November, 2019, the Lord through the Vessel refers to a song that was sung during the worship: “Wo ne Nyame a, wo ma yedi yie” (i.e., You are the God who ensures our well-being). In another prophecy, the Lord through the vessel begins with reference to a song sang in the course of the service, “Faithful God”. The Lord reiterates the fact of his faithfulness to his children and instructs the congregants to follow and act upon the teaching on giving. The words of the prophecy are:

Here I am, the faithful God. I, the Lord, who speaks and I keep watch over my word and I cause my word to be established. This evening the way you sang that I am a faithful God, truly, I am a faithful God. I will be faithful to you if the teaching I have instructed to be given concerning “Giving”, you will accept it wholeheartedly and you will understand it and you will give from the depths of your hearts to me and you won’t wait for you to be begged before you give, then I, also, will be faithful to you and you will testify that truly I am faithful to you. Because if you give to me and you see it as giving to support my work, I, the Lord, won’t sit down and just look at you. Then, I too will give you in return. I will cause you to be a blessing. [...] I will bless you spiritually. I will bless the work of your hands. I will bless your physical bodies. I will bless even the fruits of your bodies. I will bless you. I want to bless you, that is why it has become necessary for you to give [...] (Prophecy, November 10, 2019).

In yet another prophecy through Sister Mavis Gyan, the entire MCCM receives divine intervention through the ministration of the Youth Choir on the occasion of a Joint Thanksgiving Service held on 10th February, 2019. The ministration thus becomes a channel through which divine mercy is bestowed on members of the Ministry. The benefits derived from this divine mercy are numerous and border on spiritual, physical, and economic wellbeing. The opening words are recorded as follows:

This morning, through the song ministration of the Youth Choir, I have stood in for my Ministry and their song of praise has caused you to be truthful unto me that you have set aside today as a day of thanksgiving to me, the Lord; because they with truthful hearts sang this worship and praise song unto me, the Lord. The reason why I called this praise is because it became praise unto me. Because of this, I will have mercy on you this morning [...]. This morning, what a father should give to his children, I am giving them to you. [...] (Church transcript, February 10, 2019).

Benefits of worship

From the prophecies and the revelations perused in this study, it is clear that worship is extremely beneficial to the believer when it is done in reverence with utter devotion. Perhaps the reason for this is that in worship the believers do not make requests; rather, they extol God in songs of praise, worship and thanksgiving for who he is as the Triune God. They offer what they describe as the “fruit of our lips” in reverent worship (Hebrews 13:15, KJV). If one’s

spiritual posture in such moments meets divine approval, he/she becomes a beneficiary of divine benevolence.

In a word of knowledge through Sister Anowa Aikins, the Lord indicates that he has some blessings to bestow on some of the members. He therefore instructs the church to have a 10-minute worship session before the benediction and he would grant them the blessings. The directive was carried out with the expectation of the fulfilment of the promised blessings on those concerned. This occurred on November 15, 2019.

In similar fashion, a word through Sister Georgina Peters in one service indicated that the Lord was going to open doors of opportunities for some of the members through the worship. However, this word was spoken a week later on 2nd October, 2019, when the vessel apologised to the Lord before the whole congregation for not delivering the word at the time it was given. On 21st November, 2019, Sister Georgina Peters reported a revelation she saw during the worship of a huge tree with ripe fruits which were meant for the members of the congregation.

Divine accomplishments through music

Songs are sometimes given to individuals for their personal walk in the faith. In such cases, the texts of the given songs are for meditation and to guide the believer's actions. In a word through Sister Anowa Aikins on 15th September, 2019, a sister is called in connection with bitterness that causes her to feel sick from time to time. Although she has let go, it is not up to the level God expects. The Lord wants to do something in her life that day. The Worship Team is asked to sing a specific song. The sister is to study the words of the song. If she does not understand any part of the song, she should ask for an

explanation from the one who led the song. The song is in Twi, “Matwen Ewurade anim” (I have waited on the Lord). It is expected that a thorough understanding of the text of the song will enable her to act in accordance with the word of the Lord and let go completely of any hidden bitterness.

Evil spirits are dispelled through music also, and machinations of the adversary are also thwarted. In a word to a sister through Sister Georgina Peters, the Lord sacks an evil spirit from the sister’s home as one of the pastors sings in Ga, “Nyɛ kwɛaa lɛ yɛ sɛnmɔtso lɛ nɔ...egbenaa” (Look at him on the cross... It is finished). The song was sung in response to an instruction from the Lord requesting the said Pastor to give him thanks by singing a song. Through that same song, the Lord delivers one of the Pastor’s children from a planned spiritual attack by the enemy. This took place during an evening service on 2nd October, 2019.

Future health problems are also dealt with through music. According to a word through Sister Mavis Gyan on 7th August, 2019, the Lord says that through the song ministration, he has done something about an impending health problem that will cause a sister’s death.

Divine visitation through music

Most often, song ministration goes on without members having any knowledge of what has transpired spiritually. However, on many occasions, prophecy and revelations enable believers to become aware of what has occurred in the realm of the spirit during song ministration, and testimonies of members shed light and confirm the physical manifestation of the spiritual occurrences which are made known by the Spirit of God through the Vessels.

Deliverance and healing through music as learned from the prophetic activity covers a whole range of issues, from shameful conditions, medical/health-related issues, demonic activity, and so on. The following examples were gathered during observation of the services in MCCM.

For instance, a sister who is of marital age who wets her bed – a condition unknown to anyone but herself – is delivered through choir ministration. The word of knowledge came before the choir ministered and it indicated what the Lord was going to do for the sister during the song ministration. The description of the sister was that she had reached an age for marriage but because of this condition, she was not considering marriage and no one knows about her condition. In this instance, a very private issue is supposedly resolved through music, a divine act accomplished through music on 7th August, 2019.

On another occasion, a promise made by the Lord to the youth is further established through music. Through word of knowledge on 21st November, 2019, the Lord instructs the Worship Team to sing and school-going youth will receive enlightenment and deep understanding by which the promise made will be fulfilled – that great names or prominent figures will come out of the youth of the Ministry. In this case, music is used to further the process for the fulfilment of a divine promise.

People receive a divine touch during services, knowingly and sometimes, unknowingly. They become aware when they are called individually through prophetic/revelatory utterances. An example occurred on 30th December, 2019. Through word of knowledge, a sister is asked to come forward and sit while the Youth Choir sings and the Lord will do something in connection with her health. The Choir then sings “You are bigger than any other god, you are great”

(“Bigger” by Celestine Donkor). As the sister thanked the Lord afterwards, she indicated that the previous day she had prayed earnestly regarding her health, and she had been praising God. The sister came forward with the aid of a walking stick, but after the ministration, she walked by herself to her seat indicating that she had received a divine touch.

As explained earlier, there are occasions where the course of the service is changed through divine instruction given through prophecy/revelations. In one service, after the worship segment, and during the transition song, that is, whilst the song was going on, there was a word in which the Lord instructed the Worship Team to continue singing for about twenty minutes, and that His Spirit was moving in the midst of the congregation and the Soldiers (i.e., church leaders) should be alert.

Following the instruction, the Worship Team went on to sing about seven songs in reggae-like, upbeat rhythm. While the singing went on many members came to the front to dance, some lay on the floor, some were kneeling on the staircase leading up to the stage. The atmosphere was charged with almost the entire congregation on their feet, with the Soldiers moving among the congregation. When the music came to an end, a slow-paced contemplative song was raised and this built up into worship. And then everything finally died down. The service conductor then moved on stage and asked the congregation to lift up their hands and thank the Lord.

Immediately after this, a Vessel stood up speaking in tongues. The Head Pastor asked the congregation to commit the Vessel into the Lord’s hands. Then the Worship Team raised a song after which the Head Pastor prayed for the Lord to speak to His children. The opening words of the Vessel made it clear that the

prophecy was a reaction to what had just preceded it in the service. The prophecy began with:

Tonight, I have caused you to see what is meant by breakthrough
... What I made the Israelites to use days to do, I have made you
do it in twenty minutes. Doors that have been shut, I have opened
... How Pastor [Wallace] preached yesterday and said, I took him
through a whirlwind created by the enemy, likewise I have taken
you through ... I have opened avenues to you ... What you should
get, you will get ... Yours is to collect and pick up [the things I
have provided] ... I am still in your midst. (Prophecy, December
29, 2019).

After this, there was a mighty shout, and the congregation was rejoicing, A song was raised by the Worship Team, “Hallelujah eh!, Hallelujah oh! ... It’s the sound of victory.” A lot of people move to the front to dance and jubilate. At the end, there was a loud shout from the congregation.

In this instance, the Spirit of God through the vessel changed the course of the service and turned it into a service of praise, thanksgiving and worship. This created the right atmosphere for the Lord to accomplish great things for the believers. In a later sermon, the congregation was made to understand that what the Lord made reference to was the fall of the wall of Jericho, which was accomplished after days of marching around the wall (Joshua 6: 1- 21. KJV). For this congregation, therefore, the Lord had accomplished a mighty feat through a brief period of praise.

Believers also receive freedom from non-medical conditions. In a service on 21st November, 2019, a sister in marriage who occasionally wets her bed, and

all others experiencing this condition receive divine mercy as the Worship Team is instructed through a word by the Lord to sing. The song raised is “I am free, praise the Lord, I am free, no more chains holding me, my soul is resting, it’s just a blessing; praise the Lord, Hallelujah, I’m free.”

In another service, after an extensive move of the Spirit of God through the Vessels, the Lord indicated in a word that through the Senior Choir’s ministration, he had sealed all the blessings he had given the congregation that day. The Choir had sung, “God Alone”. This occurred on 31st December, 2019.

Song ministration sometimes also triggers testimony. A sister described her experience during testimony time in this vignette:

On Wednesday, when the Senior Choir sang “You are the balm of Gilead ... You are the air I breathe ...”, she remembered she had a testimony to give. Some time back, she was experiencing shortness of breath each time she woke up; when she breathes, she feels some pain in her chest that is unexplainable. The Senior Choir, has ministered the song in the past and so she had learned it. So each time she experienced the shortness of breath, she would sing the song, “You are the air I breathe ...”. She does not know when the condition left her and she had forgotten completely until the Senior Choir’s ministration on Wednesday. And so she was expressing her gratitude to God. (Field Notes, January 24, 2020).

The testimony indicates that believers learn songs through the ministration of the singing groups, and these songs have an impact on their personal walk as believers. In this instance, a song learnt through the choir’s ministration became

a vehicle for healing; the song was used as a personal confession in time of sickness and contributed to the healing of the sister's ailment.

Through prophetism, the normal programme of church activities is sometimes changed. During one Sunday morning service, the Lord through prophecy gave instructions for an evening service to be held that day devoted to praise and worship, and thanksgiving. As directed, the evening service was held. Part of the prophecy given in the morning was that through the service of praise, worship and thanksgiving, the Lord would deliver and heal.

The church complied with the directive given through the prophecy and this was what ensued:

From 5:00pm, songs were lifted led by the Worship Team. There was a worship segment and a praise segment. The music was continuous led by different singers. The Lord instructed in the morning that we should come and praise, and worship, and thank Him because He deserves it and He will deliver and heal. Earlier at the Peniel Hour on Thursday, 30th January, 2020, the Lord said we should find a day to praise Him. This evening, the praise and worship and music events are all spontaneous and the congregation is ecstatic and the shouts are rapturous. The auditorium is filled, and today the praises segment was not so long, but rather the free-flowing and worship-style songs made the service very different. [...] Some of the songs that were raised apart from the regular worship songs were "You are great", "Great are you, Lord", "You carry me when some carry their gods" and "Nara ekelem o". (Field Notes, February 2, 2020).

Although there was no prophecy or revelation during the praise and worship service, it was believed that the Lord had delivered and healed as He had promised earlier through the prophecy. Such prophetic words indicate that deliverance and healing occurs when believers praise and worship.

On another occasion on 20th February, 2020, as the Senior Choir ministered in a popular chorus, “Amen, Amen, nhyira ne anuonyam” (Amen, Amen, blessing and glory), a Vessel stood up, was given a microphone, and she began to move through the congregation praying in tongues. Most of the congregants were standing and singing along with hands raised. This went on until the song ministration came to an end. The Vessel then prophesied, and the Lord said that through the song, he had delivered and healed.

In that same service, another Vessel came out with a word in which the Lord instructed all sisters who experience severe menstrual pains that are like a disease, and those who experience severe pains in their breast to stand up while the Worship Team ministers, and as the Team does so, the Holy Spirit will move and touch most of them. The Worship Team then sang “My Healing is in God’s Hands.”

Through prophecies and revelations such as those described above, the MCCM Pentecostals encounter the divine in their worship services and experience divine benevolence through music. These may be partly the reasons why they frequently meet in ritual time and devote a lot of time to music-making.

Chapter Summary

In addition to the scriptures, prophecies and revelations have shaped the MCCM congregation and they also form the basis of musical thought and practice in MCCM. The prophecies/revelations concerning music address

permissible music, appropriate conduct for music-makers, integrity in musical service, and the benefits. Through music, congregants receive spiritual liberation, divine healing and various forms of divine intervention. Ideas about music and music-making are gleaned from prophetic utterances and revelations. As music is employed in the invocation of divine presence, the requirement of piety and the appropriate spiritual posture and state of heart and mind is expected to be met by music-makers at all times. Music-inspired prophecies often make reference to some musical event that occurred in the course of services and point to the significant role of music in the MCCM context.

CHAPTER NINE

MUSIC AND PROPHETISM: INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

Introduction

Pentecostals all around the world share their own personal accounts of being healed, delivered from demonic possession, having their marriages repaired, succeeding at work or in business enterprises, and having other needs satisfied, usually as a result of what is believed to be a miraculous intervention of God through his Spirit (Anderson & Ford, 2005). All of these experiences are frequently supported, either explicitly or implicitly, by scriptural evidence or something God revealed. Therefore, the Bible and revelations become sources of miraculous answers to human needs and proof of the actuality of "supernatural" encounters (Anderson & Ford, 2005). In Pentecostal/charismatic liturgy, the sharing of stories or "testimonies" is prominent. Through these, people describe their experiences of divine intervention. In this chapter, the focus is on personal experiences of music and prophetism shared by some MCCM Pentecostals. These accounts highlight the important role of music as a conduit through which Pentecostals encounter the divine presence.

Lived Musical Experiences

It has been noted that "experience is integral to and functions authoritatively within Pentecostalism" and it is "an authoritative means by which God is known and the divine will revealed; as such it holds epistemological value" (Neumann, 2012, p. 101). Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) touches on experience as "one of the main defining characteristics of indigenous Pentecostal thought and praxis in Ghana" and notes that the Pentecostal belief in the doctrine of the Spirit is "given active expression through experience" (p.

242). Citing Peter L. Berger, Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) notes that “human experience could also contain theologically relevant data” (p.242). In like manner, an examination of musical experiences in a Pentecostal/charismatic setting could reveal knowledge about the relevance of music in sacred contexts.

According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2013), Pentecostal/charismatic worship is therapeutic, and “music plays a critical role in this therapeutic and edifying process of Pentecostal/charismatic worship” (p.31). Health and well-being of the adherents, as this study shows, is one of the end products of the Pentecostal/charismatic worship experience. The immediacy of God’s presence is often experienced through musical ministration with “confirmation” through prophetism.

Health and well-being are both physical and spiritual with reference to a verse in the Bible: “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you, and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul” (3 John vrs. 2, NRSV). It is apparent that when MCCM Pentecostals meet, they expect to derive healing from their worship experiences through divine encounters even though not all the sick in the church are healed, and ultimately, healing is limited to divine providence.

The experiences and testimonies discussed below are in relation to music and prophetism and they were shared during face to face interviews. In these narratives, the participants do not point out that the interventions they received were partly due to their musical preferences. As mentioned earlier, the MCCM Pentecostals seem to flow with the music used in their services. They rather place emphasis on the manner in which the music is ministered as explained earlier in Chapter 7. In the accounts given by the participants in this study, some

received a divine touch through music that brought an end to their physical ailments.

The Wallace case I

In the case of Pastor Wallace (to be referred to subsequently as the “Wallace case I”), his battle with boils on his body came to an end when he received a divine touch through the worship rite during church service and was subsequently given dietary direction. Early in the service on the day of this divine encounter, Pastor Wallace was given a word from the Lord, indicating that the Lord wanted to touch him through the worship, and he was thus admonished to be in the Spirit during the worship. Then, after the worship, through another word from the Lord, he was told that the Lord had touched him. The word included an instruction for him to use olive oil exclusively for cooking his meals. After a day or two, he realized that all the boils on his body had disappeared and he has since then not experienced boils again. On the severity of the condition, Pastor Wallace narrated:

“When I married, I married in 1990. I went through boils. There was a time when [the] boils that were on my body [were] one hundred and twenty-five. Unbelievable! I had ten on my head, five here, five there, my back, my front, underneath, my leg, so at times, I couldn’t even sit or lie [down]. Which part am I going to lie [on]? It was for a period of about ... 1991 to 1996 - five years (O. Wallace, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

In Wallace case I, first of all, the believer was made aware of the divine intention to touch him. Secondly, the believer was required to be in the Spirit during the worship. This meant that he was to focus his mind on the Lord and

on the words of the songs that were being used during the worship rite. The word to the believer at the end of the worship meant that he had been in the Spirit and had thus received the divine touch, even though he did not feel anything physically in the church room. He said, “I didn’t feel anything. But inwardly, I knew I’d been touched.” This shows that receiving a divine touch may not be “dramatic.” It may happen unnoticed by the believer, as it was in Wallace case 1. Yet, in a couple of days, what happened supernaturally reflected in his body physically with the disappearance of the boils.

The significant thing is that the divine touch was received during music ministration (i.e., during the worship rite of the service) and the knowledge of this divine intervention was made known through prophetism. While music is the channel through which some divine interventions are accomplished, the role of the believer in focusing intently on the Lord through the engagement of the mind and spirit in unity is of great importance. Reflection and meditation on the songtexts are thus very important. In Wallace case I, the experience of healing was not mediated through the laying on of hands, but via music.

The Wallace case II

In similar fashion, Pastor Wallace narrates another personal experience of healing through worship, which I will refer to as the Wallace case II. Some years ago, he was unwell (although he could not remember the exact ailment at the time of the interview) and had been to the hospital the previous day and had undergone a series of tests. Some medications were prescribed for him. He remembers complaining to his wife that the medications were too many. At the morning devotion (church service) the next morning, he again received a word from the Lord to be in the Spirit during the worship. Again, after the worship,

there was another word from the Lord to him that he had been healed and therefore did not need to take any medication. Following this, he did not take the prescribed medications and he was made well.

Although these accounts of healing do not indicate what transpired musically in the worship, it appears however that divine healing can occur given the right spiritual musical atmosphere, where the music makers are “Spirit-led” and functioning under the unction of the Holy Spirit (as described by the music makers of MCCM in this study), and when the worshippers are active participants who are totally engrossed in the activity of worship. As Kraeuter (2007) points out, “music played by someone whose heart is tuned toward the Lord can have strong spiritual impact” (p. 21). For the music maker/musician therefore, his/her spiritual posture is key. In short, “the heart attitude of the musician is more important than his musical ability” (Kraeuter, 2007, p. 152). The congregation are able to “tune in” to the Spirit through music. Thus, the assertion that “music helps achieve a focal point for the congregation” is plausible (Kraeuter, 2007, p. 22).

The Coleman case

In the experience recounted by Pastor Coleman (which will be referred to as the Coleman case), he went to church for the morning devotion (Saturday morning service) some years ago. In the course of the service, individuals from the congregation were called to minister in songs. A brother was called to sing. Pastor Coleman narrates it this way: “And as he [the brother] was singing, I just let myself go in the Spirit. He ministered and I was sitting.” In the service, after the ministration, there was a revelation through one of the vessels, Sister Georgina Peters, in which she saw that as the brother was ministering, Pastor

Coleman was standing with his hands lifted. This was what she saw although physically, Pastor Coleman was seated. Narrating the additional word given through the vessel, Pastor Coleman said, “and the Lord said he had done something about my ‘ribs’ and this I had not told anyone.” He narrates further:

I had a sensation in my ribs so I went to see the doctor and the doctor said I should go for an x-ray. So when I took the x-ray, the woman said it wasn’t so clear so I should go for a scan. So it was when I was about to go for the scan that I had this experience that they said my hands were lifted and the Lord has done something about my ribs. So when I took the scan, the woman said, ‘Pastor, this is strange. The lungs should almost be the same. But it seems one of your lungs is almost chopped off. One part is almost chopped off. But for some reason, it is no more going up. It has stopped.’ (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

Pastor Coleman thereafter reported to the Head Pastor what happened afterwards:

So, in fact, I came to tell our Head Pastor that the sensation I was having has ceased from the day that revelation was seen. So what it meant was that it [the lung] was chopping up, and so by the time you would have realized, one is gone. You know, so since the day the Lord gave that revelation, we went to do another one [scan] and it was there. It hadn’t increased, it hadn’t decreased. It was just there. And it is so up till today. (E. Coleman, personal communication, October 1, 2020).

This experience leads Pastor Coleman to say, “So I say to myself, ‘ei, being in the Spirit is good oh!’” He then goes on to advise that, “if someone is singing, you don’t just look at the person, and mark the person in your head” or pass comments such as ‘the mouth is not twisting well’ or ‘he is not standing well’ and so on. He concludes with these words that instead of passing mental comments about the singer or music maker, what he did in that experience and continues to do is: “I am focusing on the words [of the song] and linking up with the Saviour, and I had my healing. So no drugs [medications] were given, nothing was administered, and I am well till now.”

In the Coleman case, a health challenge which had sent him to the hospital was assuaged through divine intervention with music as the conduit. The idea of “being in the Spirit” is thus not only a necessary requirement for the music makers, but also appears to apply to the listening believer. Being in the Spirit enables the right spiritual posture that facilitates the reception of the divine touch. As exemplified in the Coleman case, in the state of listening to the song, his spiritual posture was of a standing position with hands raised, showing perhaps alertness and openness to receive from the divine “other”. Once again, meditation on the songtexts directs the mind to the Omnipotent God by means of the Holy Spirit.

The Yalley case

The narrative by Pastor Yalley highlights the relation between spiritual music and the physical health of the believer. In the interview, he shared the fact that he almost had a stroke, and had been experiencing pains on the left side of his body. While taking medication, he had also been praying for complete healing. He did this for a long period of time without seeing any results. Then,

in one service, there was a word from the Lord in which the church was instructed to hold a two-day praise, worship and thanksgiving service. Pastor Yalley intimates that after he came for the two-day programme, and he participated in the praises and thanksgiving, he noticed that the pain began to gradually subside and then completely disappeared. What makes him certain that it was through the praises and worship services that he had his healing was because, as he points out, “the Lord himself told us through prophecy that when we come and we do that [i.e. praises and thanksgiving], he will heal us, he will deliver us, he will do so many things for us.”

The Yalley testimony indicates the efficacy of music as a vehicle for the health of the believer, when the music ministration coincides with divinely appointed time. The times and seasons for divine visitation are unknown to the believer. As this case suggests, prophetism enables believers to become aware of the nature of the divine intervention they receive in their lives and music serves as one of the channels through which divine healing is received. As Pastor Yalley points out, “I know what was happening to me, and I came to sing and dance and praise him [the Lord], and I experienced afterwards that the pain was gone.”

The Anowa case I

The experience of Sister Anowa Aikins concerns the healing of cancer of the bone, a diagnosis reached after she had undergone a CT scan. As she narrated, for a period of six months, she experienced a sharp pain in her right leg. When the doctors detected the cancer cells, she kept praying to God to intervene especially because as a vessel, she usually stands on her feet for long periods when the Lord is using her. She narrates what happened this way:

Then one day, through the music, as the choir was singing, and the music was going on, the anointing was upon me and the Lord used me [in prophecy]. After the ministration was over, that was it. And since then, I didn't have to go through chemotherapy, I didn't take any medication, not even, ... I remember those days, when it's hurting, I'd take paracetamol. That was the end of it. There wasn't any medication at all. No medication for bones or that kind of thing. No. Nothing at all (A. Aikins, personal communication, May 27, 2021).

According to Sister Anowa Aikins, she got confirmation of her healing several months later after another scan in a different medical facility outside Ghana. When I asked her how she was sure that it was through the music she received her healing, she said, "I am very, very sure; because my mind was on it [the music], I was listening. I have forgotten the particular song ... but my mind was 'Lord, you are faithful.'" This suggests that alertness of the believer during song ministration can bring about healing.

The Anowa case II

Alertness during song ministration can be achieved through inward prayer on the part of the listening believer. During the service on 7th August, 2019, Sister Anowa Aikins gave a testimony of what happened to her in the course of the service. She explained that while a particular song was being sung, "Yɛsom Nyame a ɔyɛ Onwanwani" (We serve a wonderful God), she prayed concerning a severe pain she was feeling in her body and the pain left. She therefore expressed her gratitude to God by sharing the testimony.

The Fynn case

Music-makers (i.e., singers, musicians, worship leaders, etc) sometimes experience healing while performing their liturgical functions. The experience of Sister Marian Fynn is an example even though there is no medical history to support what occurred. She shared her experience of leading worship in one of the meetings of the Soldiers of the Cross. Whilst leading the worship, she began to shake inwardly and by the end of the worship she was seriously shaking physically. Immediately after she finished leading the worship, there was a prophecy in which the Lord revealed that she had a fibroid in her womb. She narrated the incident in this manner:

[...] There was a prophecy. That was the day God came in to say that I had a fibroid in my stomach [womb]. And that how I opened up and I gave out my all to Him and I caused His people to worship Him in spirit and in truth, for that reason, He has melted that fibroid in my stomach [womb] (M. Fynn, personal communication, January 13, 2021).

In the Fynn case, she had no idea of the condition mentioned in the prophecy. She only got to know on that day. It appears that she had fulfilled a divine purpose; she “opened up” and gave her all. This means that she yielded completely – mind, body, and soul – during the moment of leading worship. This enabled her to serve as lead worshipper, bringing the other worshippers to focus on the divine, to offer an acceptable worship “in spirit and in truth.” The benefit she derived for performing this function was the healing and elimination of a health condition of which she had no prior knowledge. Perhaps, the physical shaking she experienced was evidence that indeed something had taken place

supernaturally. As she mentioned about the shaking, “I had not experienced that before.” Although not medically verifiable, this account is indicative of the perceived health and well-being benefits derived through music.

The Addy case

As mentioned earlier, music-makers may become beneficiaries of divine benevolence while performing their liturgical duties. As one chorister narrated, she was healed of a severe neck pain while she sang on stage with the Senior Choir in the song “Balm of Gilead” – a song about healing. Her account is as follows:

I came to church one evening session, can’t remember if it was a revival or retreat, but one of them. There was this severe pain in my neck. The Senior Choir was ministering in “Balm of Gilead”. On stage I prayed to God to heal me too. I’ll say halfway home, I realized the pain in my neck had disappeared and I knew God had healed my neck and I gave thanks to him (J. Addy, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

This healing came about because as she was singing, she was at the same time praying for healing, and her prayer was answered. The state of mind of the music-maker is thus very important. Oftentimes, what goes on mentally when one is making music determines the results of the music ministration – whether one will reap any benefits or not.

The Lamptey case

Similar to the Fynn case, Brother Joel Lamptey spoke of an experience he had many years ago when he led worship. He narrated his encounter thus:

Sometime in 2010, after I led worship at Odorkor [church premises], God working through Sister [Georgina Peters], she saw something come out of me and God said he had taken something out of me. I used to experience chest pains a lot at that time but since then I have not experienced it again (J. Lamptey, personal communication, January 12, 2021).

In this case, Brother Joel Lamptey was experiencing a health challenge which ceased after this divine encounter through worship. The revelation points to the fact that supernatural activities such as deliverance occur when music is ministered. Such supernatural occurrences inure to the benefit of the believer and bring about physical and/or spiritual relief.

The Ghartey case

Spiritual relief is what is gained when deliverance occurs. In the case of Brother Kwesi Ghartey, he experienced deliverance from spiritual bondage when he led the Youth Choir in ministration. He explained how it happened as follows:

[One day] in 2018, I came to church as usual just for regular fellowship. The Glorious Choir, then Youth Choir, was called for song ministration and I was tasked with leading the song “Adom Wura, Wo ne me adi no yie” (Gracious God, you have dealt well with me). [...] To God be the glory, it was a good ministration.

He continued:

After we sat, there was a prophecy [word of knowledge] for me through our Sister [Georgina Peters]. The [word] was that there was a very strong muscular figure behind me spiritually and I was

bound to him with chains. The presence of that spirit would not make me prosper in any way. But the Lord said that as the ministration was going on, he himself broke those chains off. The Lord said he will make me prosperous only if I walk in his path for me. Truth be told, I got confirmation something happened because I felt a burning sensation on my thigh (K. Gharthey, personal communication, December 1, 2020).

The Gharthey case is an example of deliverance from spiritual bondage through music ministration.

The Adjei case

The Adjei case suggests that powerful music ministration can bring about Satanic attack on the music-maker. Hence, the need for the music-maker to be fervent in supplication and be spiritually secured under divine protection.

In the experience of Sister Rose Adjei, she was called to minister in one service. (From time to time, individuals are called to minister in songs). The song she sang was about the wonder-working power in the name of Jesus. She narrated what ensued in the service:

Immediately after the song, there was a word through Sister [Georgina Peters] that the song I sang mentioning the name of Jesus, the enemy is furious and wants to inflict me with skin rashes that will have no cure. So the congregation should pray with me. Just after the prayer, there was a prophecy through [another] sister, and the Lord said he had taken away that disease. At once the Lord said he had taken away that disease (R. Adjei, personal communication, January 20, 2021).

In the account above, the word of knowledge revealed the intention of the enemy to attack the believer because of her conviction of the power in the name of Jesus expressed through song. The plan of the adversary was then halted when the congregation was asked to pray with the sister and the prophecy that followed confirmed that the attack had indeed been thwarted.

In proclaiming the word of God through song then, the music-maker is engaged in a spiritual warfare and may come under attack from the adversary as the Adjei case suggests. Adequate spiritual preparation is thus a requirement for effective music ministration and for protection against demonic attacks.

The Hinson case

As indicated earlier, health and well-being are part of the expected benefits of Pentecostal worship. Well-being may be expanded to include spiritual upliftment and elevation. Through music ministration, music-makers may be elevated to positions of spiritual authority. This is exemplified in the case of Sister Grace Hinson and it occurred after she had led worship in one service. The day before this occurred, she had led worship in the evening service and the feedback she got was that it was a poor ministration. As a result, she went home depressed, and spent the entire night praying and listening to worship songs. The next morning, when she attended church service, the Head Pastor at the time asked her to lead the worship. She narrated what ensued:

[...] when I just came in [to the service], he [former Head Pastor] said I should lead the worship. And by the grace of God, the Lord in his mercy helped me. You know, ... and just after the worship, the Lord came in through prophecy, and he said he was pleased with the worship and he hadn't planned to make me a Soldier,

but the worship had pleased him, so that day, he had me anointed as a Soldier of the Cross [as one of the leaders in the Ministry] (G. Hinson, personal communication, January 14, 2021).

As leaders, the Soldiers of the Cross assist the Pastors in their work, and they are instrumental in the running of the church. Elevation to such a position comes also with responsibilities. However, it is also honorific – only given divinely through prophetism, and it is a landmark feat in the believer's walk. As the Hinson case suggests, elevation can come through effective music-making.

The Sackey case

Spiritual music can also cause one to feel uplifted in mood or spirit. Spiritual songtexts in particular enable the spiritually attentive listener to be transported from a low emotional state to one of hopefulness. The experience of Sister Gloria Sackey exemplifies this and she shared it in this manner:

Some time ago, I was so low in spirit. And that day if the Youth Choir had been called to sing, I don't know what would have happened. But the Senior Choir was called first. When we went on stage, we sang 'Amen, Amen, nhyira ne anuonyam' (Amen, Amen, blessing and glory). In fact, every word in the song ministered to me.

She explained why she was feeling low:

I was so low in spirit because I had an attack and it seemed to me that God does not hear my prayers, but the song made me know that God is powerful as the words of the song indicated. So I got to know that God was able to deliver me from the attack I experienced. So I was soaked in the spirit and immediately

everything about me changed. Immediately, everything changed

(G. Sackey, personal communication, February 16, 2021).

The Sackey case buttresses the point that the act of music-making has positive effects on the music-maker including emotional upliftment.

Chapter Summary

The sharing of testimonies is prominent in Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity. Through these, believers describe their experiences of divine intervention in their lives as a means of strengthening the faith of others. The experiences of music and prophetism shared by the MCCM Pentecostals point to the fact that health and well-being are derived through music in Pentecostal/charismatic worship. Divine encounters that bring about healing, deliverance, elevation and upliftment can be expected during music ministration in the P/c context. Although divine encounters are possible through music ministration, the ministration must coincide with divinely-appointed times and seasons for divine intervention. The music-maker derives benefits when he/she is totally engrossed in the ministration with intent focus on the divine, and the spiritually attentive listener also reaps benefits which altogether inure to their health and well-being, both physical and spiritual.

CHAPTER TEN

RELIGIOUS/MUSICAL EXPERIENCE AND EMBODIMENT

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the experiences of individuals in the MCCM setting were discussed. In this chapter, the focus is on the role of the body in the religious/musical experiences described by the participants in the study.

The Body in Pentecostal/charismatic Worship

From a theological viewpoint, “embodiment is the proper state of human existence” and it is “an essential feature of God’s holistic creation of human beings” (Allison, 2019, p. 161). The body plays a critical role in religious/musical experiences in the Pentecostal/charismatic context, particularly in music-making and performance, and prophetism. As Allison (2019) points out, “a theology of human embodiment affects the worship of God,” in that, “God’s design for his people gathered to worship him is that they as embodied human beings express *bodily* what is transpiring in their *heart* and *mind*” (p.173, emphasis added). So what is the concept of the body in this context? Embodiment encompasses the material and ‘immaterial’ aspects of the person, in other words, body, soul and spirit – the tripartite view of the person (Calkins, 1990; Csordas, 1994c; Ferguson, 2000). This is because worship cannot be merely physical.

Though music is experienced through the senses, the act of singing in worship entails the engagement of the mind and vocal apparatus, and must emanate from the spirit – a unity of the totality of the person (Calkins, 1990; Ferguson, 2000). Through the spirit, the supernatural Holy Spirit is able to engage the believer and direct his/her actions as the spirit is the communication

channel between God and man (Calkins, 1990). The identity of the worshipper is thus spiritual as worshiping in the Spirit is central in Pentecostalism (Albrecht, 2009).

Spiritual agency (Ryle, 2011) is thus required in the effective music-making of the believer. The spiritual cannot be disengaged from the physical body because there is a constant “tuning-in” to the Spirit. A Pentecostal worship leader, Darlene Zschech (2009) states: “In actual fact, as we are people of spirit, soul, and body, I find that worship without the Spirit can be reduced to a merely religious, two-dimensional activity” and she adds, “I have found that without the Spirit there is no way forward to our worship being in truth” (p. 286). This statement highlights the important role of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal/charismatic worship.

In the work of the MCCM vessels, particularly those who prophesy, the sensing of the anointing, although indescribable in human terms according to them, is often associated with certain physical “feelings.” In the delivery of prophecy also, one observes some emotive characteristics, such as a high or stern tone of voice, and also gestures such as the raising of hands. Yet, the vessels indicate that what is seen is not the act of man but divine expressions through the body of the human vessel. The physical actions of the believers in worship is attributed to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the body cannot be viewed as separate from the nonphysical aspects of the person, that is, the believer.

The body is activated by the spirit which is in union with the divine “other” through the means of the new birth, that is, conversion. Through prayer and the study and application of the scriptures, Pentecostal/charismatic Christians seek for their physical actions to be Spirit-led. The ignition therefore

is from within and that determines the physical actions in music-making and prophecy.

As the existential ground of the sacred, in Pentecostal belief, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the divine “other” indwells the body of the believer (Wright, 2009). Since the divine other is Spirit, it bears witness with the spirit of the believer, giving the believer the identity of a child of God. The believer therefore “lives in the Spirit” and is required to also “walk in the Spirit” in Pentecostal/charismatic belief. The divine other resides *in* the believer, and is also without, that is, being *with* the believer as well (Wright, 2009). By means of the Holy Spirit baptism, the Spirit of God also empowers the believer (Albrecht, 2009). By virtue of the *spiritual* identity of the believer as a child of God, the body of the believer must be thought of as ‘subject’ to the Spirit, for the act of worship is fundamentally spiritual.

The foregoing notwithstanding, certain bodily gestures and movements are learned. For instance, there is constant admonition for believers to lift their hands to thank the Lord or to ask for the anointing for worship or praises, or to receive the blessing of the Lord through the benediction.

Movement and actions during ministration are enabled when the music-maker experiences inner bliss, or when he/she is totally immersed in the music. As one worship leader intimates, “I can’t stand when I’m singing. When you see me moving, then the joy has come.” This joy, which is described as being “of the Lord” sometimes causes her to move amidst the congregation, to run, or to kneel while ministering. A choir leader also indicates that her body plays a significant role in the ministration. Her role as conductor is to enliven the singers and this is achieved when the song ministers to her. If the song ministers to her,

then she can “be in the song”, and as well the singers and other music-makers. This facilitates physical action and movement such as the lifting of hands, and swaying, and the total engagement of the personhood of the music-maker. She states that, “If the song ministers to you, you have to be in the song, so that as you sing, it will touch the rest of the choir, and they will also be active.”

This viewpoint may corroborate a statement attributed to C. Ph. E. Bach, that, “a musician cannot otherwise move people, but he be moved himself” (Langer, 1957, p. 214). The impact of the ministration may stem from the performer’s personal experience which he/she translates via the music to the listeners, buttressing the assertion that “all moving and poignant music must translate some personal experience” (Langer, 1957, p. 215).

An explanation is given as to why the MCCM Pentecostals raise their hands in worship and so on. The choir leader mentioned above notes that, “as they lift their hands in worship, they do so because they are ‘in the song’. They are in the Spirit and are in the song unlike holding the hymnbook and standing straight. Although the choirs in MCCM occasionally minister from song sheets, the general view is that such modes of rendering music repress the outward show of emotion.

The Body in Prophetism

The body does play a role in prophetism, but the MCCM Vessels are hesitant to use mundane language to explicate spiritual matters. In discussing Charismatics, Csordas (1994c) notes:

For Charismatics the spiritual is, paradoxically, ineffable and empirical at the same time. Its ineffability was captured by an informant who said that the reason the spiritual could not be

discussed was only because we have no language for it, and hence we are forced by default to describe it in the language of emotions. On the other hand, the spiritual is empirical in the sense that phenomena such as evil spirits, or the sense of divine presence, are experienced as real in their own domain, just as are viruses in the somatic and emotional trauma in the mental domains (pp. 39-40).

As the Vessels in this study indicate, the things of God are difficult to explain, particularly when it comes to the gifts of God. Although it is the same Spirit of God that uses everybody, there is variation in how each individual is used and how each one 'senses the anointing' or the presence of God. As one Vessel points out, "as for that, everybody experiences it differently. The Lord makes his presence known in different ways with different people."

For example, in the case of Sister Anowa Aikins, she says, "I can feel the anointing, maybe it starts from my heart, some kind of palpitation, stronger than that anyway." On other occasions, she may have goose pimples all over her body. At other times, there will be no such "sensations" except extreme quietness. She says, "I'll just be quiet. I wouldn't want to know anything that's around me; just my mind is on the Lord." With Sister Mavis Gyan, the anointing sometimes presents as a quiver within her, which she likens to a slight electric shock, but in a very mild form. In her case, this kind of sensation occurs often, but this, she says, is not experienced by all Vessels. A worship leader, who also prophesies, Sister Grace Hinson, also sometimes experiences some palpitation as a sign of the anointing, or what she describes as "an unusual feeling" or "uneasiness", or some form of "heaviness." She is however quick to add that

these do not necessary imply that there is a prophetic urge. The Vessel has to begin praying within him/her, asking the Lord to take over. If it is prophecy, she indicates that, “as you are praying, the Holy Spirit himself will help you to go deeper and deeper until you reach a level where you can’t hold it anymore.” At other times, as one prays, he/she would realize that they merely sensed the presence of God, and this does not result in prophecy.

As the Vessels in this study explain, the term “sensations” is inappropriate to describe the physical feelings that sometimes accompany the sensing of the anointing. They prefer to just call it the anointing of God, because, as Sister Anowa Aikins explains, “you can’t compare the Spirit of God to the things of the flesh. Flesh is flesh; the Spirit of God is the Spirit of God. Emotion doesn’t come in, feelings do not come in.... The Spirit of God takes control.” Then she adds succinctly, “that’s the anointing of the Holy Spirit, it falls on you.” When it comes to the emotive characteristics one witnesses when a Vessel is prophesying, they do not occur at the volition of the Vessel. The explanation is given that:

It’s not emotions. It’s not because you want to raise your hand and so you raise your hands. No. It’s the Spirit of God. If God is angry, of course who can stand the wrath of God, anyway? But the expression, it’s the act of the Spirit of God. If God is serious, it flows through you that way. It comes out that way. So for example, God wants to rebuke you. Such a rebuke will not be said calmly, because he’s serious. It’s the anointing of the Lord that expresses it. All these expressions will flow through the Vessel that way. It’s not an act of the Vessel. It’s not the decision

or actions of the Vessel. No. The Vessel does not decide that I want to do this or that. No. It doesn't come in at all (A. Aikins, personal communication, May 27, 2021).

It is important to note, however, that the Vessels who have the gift of word of knowledge do not usually experience 'physical sensations' as those who prophesy, although they have the ability to see and hear spiritually.

The Body in Musical Experience

Marti (2018) highlights the key role of music as "a prominent orientation device" in worship and one of its purposes is to coordinate corporate movement (p. 25). As observed in MCCM, the moment the worship leader begins with the free-flowing music, the members of the congregation who are 'moved' begin to approach the altar space (i.e., the space between the stage and the first row of seats) in a circular procession. With hands raised and making gestures relating to the song being sung, they continue in this formation. When the music changes to the rhythmically-defined segment of the worship, they begin to sway to the beat while still in the circular procession. This continues till the end of the worship when those in the circle move away to occupy their seats. In this case, which is similar to the praises segment, music is seen as coordinating corporate movement which includes dancing,

Dancing is made possible because of the presence of music. Bodily synchronization becomes possible when music is played. Musical entrainment, thus affects human bodies as well as memories and imaginations during worship (Myrick, 2018), as music leads people toward "enthusiasm or contemplation, exuberance or meditation (Marti, 2018, p. 25). Sensorimotor synchronization which enables the worshipping community to synchronize their movements

facilitates the communal experience in the P/c context. Thus, the social side of musical entrainment is seen in the engagement between the worship team or praise team and the congregation, resulting in shared musical experiences during Pentecostal/charismatic worship.

The level of individual involvement in communal worship and other music ministration differs when one observes the worshipping congregation from a distance. It is however obvious when an individual worships or ministers with total involvement in what may be explained using Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow. However, as Neitz and Spickard (1990) explain, the concept of flow is inadequate to describe religious experiences since it does not take into account the dimension of "otherness". As seen in the worshipping congregation of MCCM, the act of total involvement is described as "being in the Spirit", signalling the dimension of "otherness" or the divine. Expressions such as 'Spirit-led' and 'Spirit-filled' which are used by the MCCM Pentecostals indicate that, whether or not that is the case in every instance, they expect their actions at all times during music ministration and communal worship to emanate from the Spirit. Thus, total involvement in musical worship requires the engagement of the totality of the tripartite person – body, soul, and spirit, with the divine who dwells in the believer by means of the Holy Spirit, enabling the believer to commune with the Triune God.

The question that arises from this discussion is whether the notion of worship and the factor of the Holy Spirit has any affinity with traditional African religious practices of healing and spirit possession such as those described in Friedson's (1996) study. Despite the difficulties associated with investigations of trance and spirit possession (Jankowsky, 2007), there is no question about the

presence of spirits in the equation. In Friedson's (1996) work, he asks, "what do we make of worlds possessed by spirits, spirits moved by music?" And again, "how do we interpret a world that is neither given nor experienced in Cartesian duality?" (p. 5). While there might not be a universal answer for these questions, it may be prudent to limit one's observations to the specific ritual context under investigation, which is in this case the ritual life of the MCCM Pentecostals.

Lived Religious/musical Experiences in the P/c Context

Religious experiences occur in the ritual life of Pentecostal/charismatic Christians in various forms as seen in this study. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ritual life of the MCCM Pentecostals was highly intense and time-consuming. Church members met frequently in services and experienced divine encounters in the church setting as this study has shown. Believers' personal lives flowed into the corporate worship arena. The collective and individual lived religious/musical experiences captured in this study through observation, interviews, and conversations point to this fact.

Through these experiences, one deduces that a lifestyle of devotion to the divine entity is necessary for the discharge of liturgical duties especially in music and prophetism. As divine encounters are made possible through music ministration and prophetism, the human agents through whom such encounters are experienced ought to be seen as having a close relationship with the divine entity. As the participants in this study have shown, individual private communion with the divine has implications for what transpires in the core ritual, that is, the worship service.

Longevity of service in prophetism and music ministration appears to be a mark of loyalty and devotion in adherence to Christian principles. The

participants in this study who are involved in prophetism, for example, have each practiced and served the church for over three decades, implying that they are trustworthy since their prophetic utterances have shaped the church and caused other believers to encounter the divine.

As indicated earlier, the believers' personal lives flow into the corporate worship space and vice versa. A few examples will suffice. For instance, when a worship leader fails in her ministration, she ends up at home and engages in an all-night prayer and worship in preparation for her next opportunity to lead worship. In another instance, a worship leader receives songs to use for worship in her dreams at night. A choir leader ensures that she spends time fasting in order that when the choir she leads stands to minister, they will be effective in their ministration. A Vessel in her sickbed in hospital begins to sing a song, and receives a word from the Lord to be given to the Head Pastor that the song should be sung each time someone is to be anointed into any position in the church, and this becomes the church's practice. A Vessel may receive a word from the Lord while taking a shower at home and it will be delivered during church service. In short, the believer's everyday life is inextricably linked to the corporate ritual life. Lived religious experiences thus traverse daily routines of the believer and his/her congregational life.

The lived musical experiences described in this study point to the potency of music in a sacred context. The divine encounters that the MCCM Pentecostals experience, particularly the music-makers, include rebuke for not meeting the necessary requirements for service in the music ministry. Failure to meet the requirement as seen in one of the prophecies may lead to disqualification of the individual from rendering specific musical services in the

future such as being part of the Worship Team. Such prophetic utterances appear to highlight the important role of music-makers in the P/c context as they, through their actions or inactions, determine the potency of the music ministration and its ability to cause others to have religious/musical experiences. The experiences of healing, deliverance, elevation and other divine interventions through music suggest that the service rendered by those in the music ministry is crucial.

Chapter Summary

Pentecostal/charismatic worship involves embodied practices, some of which are learned. However, due to the spiritual nature of worship, the tripartite view of the person is often emphasized. The immaterial aspect of the person is linked to the material in worship and the dimension of otherness also comes to play. Hence, mundane language is often inadequate to describe some of the embodied experiences of the sacred. Music, as an orientation device, enables entrainment and this results in shared musical experiences. The lived musical experiences of the MCCM Pentecostals point to the potency of music in a sacred context.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MUSICAL EXPERIENCE, PROPHETISM AND PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality using the data on musical experience and prophetism in MCCM presented in the previous chapters. The notion of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity being experiential is explored. The role of ritual in the social productivity of Pentecostalism, spontaneity, the concept of encounter in P/c experience, and the therapeutic nature of P/c worship are then discussed in addition to Pentecostal worship and primal spirituality. The link between musical experience and prophetism is then established.

Pentecostal/Charismatic Experience

According to Neumann (2012), experience is fundamental to Pentecostalism and serves as an authoritative force. Further, experience has epistemological relevance since it is an authoritative method for knowing God and understanding the divine will. In the context of this experiential faith, Pentecostals place significant emphasis on two distinct and impactful experiences: the new birth, often known as conversion, and a subsequent post-conversion encounter referred to as baptism with the Holy Spirit. A succinct description of Pentecostals is as follows:

In short, then, Pentecostals are Spirit-conscious, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-empowered Christian believers. In contrast to other groups or churches that emphasize either doctrine or moral practice, Pentecostals stress affectivity. It is the *experience of God* that

matters – the felt power of the Spirit in the world, in the church, and in one's own life. Pentecostals believe the doctrine and ethics are important, but the bedrock of Pentecostal faith is experiential. It is living faith in the living God – a God who can miraculously, palpably intervene in the world – that defines the Pentecostal orientation of faith (Jacobsen, as cited in Neumann, 2012, p. 101).

As noted above, the prioritisation of affectivity in Pentecostalism distinguishes it from other denominations that place emphasis on either doctrinal teachings or moral conduct.

The subject of affectivity in Pentecostalism has been elucidated by some scholars such as James Smith. Explicating the work of Smith, Shin (2018) notes that the underlying framework of pentecostal epistemology is primarily affective (emotive) and pretheoretical in nature. It posits that the basis for objective knowledge lies in a fundamental perception that is not rooted in cognitive processes. This knowledge is derived through tangible and physical actions and experiences.

According to Shin (2018), the phenomenological descriptions provided by Smith shed light on the pentecostal practises, elucidating the underlying concepts that emphasise the inherent value of the physical body and reject the notion that the body is subordinate to the mind or dispensable. The aforementioned assertion is readily apparent in a multitude of pentecostal practises, including the prioritisation of healing, embodiment in worship, and the direct encounter with the divine through personal experience. As Shin (2018) points out, although these practices may appear to be epistemically harmless

upon initial examination, Smith contends that these pretheoretical practises serve as methods for interpreting or construing the world, functioning as a creative visualisation of a reality that is receptive to the unexpected actions of a divine entity.

Molenaar (2010) notes that, Smith, in his scholarly work, correctly observes that there is a strong emphasis on affective and narrative epistemology in Pentecostal worship. However, Smith simply ignores the cognitive and intellectual aspects of Pentecostal spirituality that are anchored in its devotion to biblical truth.

Ideally, as Molenaar (2010) suggests, in Pentecostal worship, it is desirable to engage both the cognitive and emotional aspects of an individual in a balanced manner, without prioritising one over the other. In addition, and more importantly, the focus must be on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit without which worship is impossible. This viewpoint appears to be consistent with the findings of the current study of musical experience and prophetism in MCCM. The adjectives “Spirit-conscious”, “Spirit-filled”, and “Spirit-empowered” used to describe Pentecostals, and by extension, charismatics, are thus worthy of note.

The Role of Ritual in the Social Productivity of Pentecostalism

Robbins (2011) argues on the role of ritual in the social productivity of Pentecostalism using Randall Collins’ theory of *interaction ritual chains* which has two components: a) mutual focus of attention, and b) a high degree of emotional entrainment (through bodily synchronization), and notes that, these are the factors that, according to Collins, contribute to the transformation of ordinary social encounters into successful interaction rituals. According to the theory, successful interaction rituals produce emotional energy.

Robbins (2011) notes that by participating in ritual together often, “Pentecostals go through life producing an unusually high percentage of social occasions that qualify as successful interaction rituals” (p. 58). In the Pentecostal/charismatic context, mutual focus is largely facilitated through music as in the worship rite, the praises rite, and song ministration. As Kraeuter (2007) rightly points out, “music helps achieve a focal point for the congregation” (p. 22). As observed in the worship services of MCCM, music leads towards emotional entrainment as music makers and congregants sway rhythmically and dance during worship and praises. The outcome of such physical synchronization often leads to music-inspired prophecy which provides a heightened level of mutual focus. The end result of such interaction rituals is not merely the production of emotional energy, but rather an activation of the inner spiritual man through the influence of the Spirit. In the P/c context then, successful interaction rituals are those that are spiritually uplifting, thus, making room for the dimension of otherness in Pentecostal/charismatic experience.

Again, music facilitates social bonding. As this study shows, a great amount of ritual time is devoted to music-making in P/c. It is therefore necessary to expand Albrecht and Howard’s (2014) assertion and to posit that the music-making rites (i.e., worship, praises, song ministration) are the “richest rites in distinctive, dramatic, social expressions of worship” and that “social bonding is strongly reliant on these rites” (p. 235).

Spontaneity

Lindhardt (2011) points out an important feature of P/c ritual language which is “spontaneity as an index of divine inspiration” and notes the central role of speech acts such as glossolalia, and prophecies in this regard. As

observed in MCCM, not only are the prophetic utterances spontaneous, but music-making is also often spontaneous. A song may suddenly be raised by the service conductor, or by the pastor leading the congregation in prayer for an individual or group. Although music groups plan their music ahead of services, it is not uncommon for a prepared song to be suddenly changed based on happenings during the service. Songs raised during deliverance sessions within services happen on the spur of the moment.

When revelations are being vetted, the keyboardist spontaneously begins to play a tune to occupy the congregation during the brief period of silence and inactivity. Again, during song ministration, a member who is 'moved' may suddenly begin to approach the altar space and stand or kneel in front of the stage until the music is over. All such actions are deemed to be divinely-inspired, and they point to spontaneity in P/c worship.

The Concept of Encounter

In his work, Neumann (2012) emphasises the importance of Albrecht's emphasis on the concept of encounter as a means of articulating the Pentecostal experience of God, noting that "Pentecostal experience is of the Spirit who is *Other*" (p. 113), and that the encounter is facilitated by a perception of the "immediacy of God's presence," which might be interpreted as the Spirit mediating via human emotions (sensations and intuitions). Thus, "experience of God's presence is encounter with the God who is transcendent and wholly other" (Neumann, 2012, p. 114).

Pentecostals encounter God in their worship. Albrecht (1999) notes that there are three main connotations of the term 'worship' in Pentecostal spirituality. In one sense, worship is understood as a "way of Christian life", in

another sense, as “the entire liturgy” which is the totality of the Pentecostal service, and lastly, as a specific portion of the liturgy (p. 225). As my study shows, the worship rite is the segment of the service that is led by the Worship Team. Albrecht (1999) identifies three dimensions of the worship rite, namely, “worship as encounter with hierophany, as attentiveness to God, and as yielding a sensitivity to human need” (p. 225).

The notion of worship as encounter with hierophany is supported by observations made in MCCM. The manner in which the worship rite is approached by the worship leaders interviewed is an indication of the seriousness attached to the rite. In their ministration, as explained earlier, the worship leaders together with the team seek to touch the heart of God, and would want their worship to “ascend” to God. They worship with an attitude of expectancy.

As described in previous chapters, in MCCM, the worship rite which is a period of 15 to 20 minutes of singing and music making often results in the manifestation of the Spirit through charismatic words such as prophecies, words of knowledge and other revelations. Congregants thus become aware of the divine blessings graciously bestowed on them by means of their worship. In such cases, then, the MCCM Pentecostals believe that God has descended to meet with them. In these encounters, the believers receive words of encouragement, guidance and direction, healing and other blessings. Experiences of this nature affirm to the congregants the fact that through worship, they actually encounter God. The same applies to the rite of praises which in MCCM is separate from the worship rite. The understanding of the MCCM Pentecostals is that ‘God inhabits the praises of his people.’ In both worship and praises, then, the MCCM

Pentecostals minister in songs to God which reflects attentiveness to God. By means of the divine encounters, their needs, both physical and spiritual, are met.

The Therapeutic Nature of P/c Worship

Asamoah-Gyadu (2013) concurs that “Pentecostal worship is about encountering God” and “as a result of its orientation towards experiencing the immediacy of God’s presence and manifestations of pneumatic phenomena, Pentecostal/charismatic worship is very therapeutic” (p.30). He adds that, “music plays a critical role in this therapeutic and edifying process of Pentecostal/charismatic worship” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. 31).

As observed in MCCM, worshippers benefit from their music-making activities. Apart from enabling mutual focus, music serves as a channel through which believers benefit from divine benevolence. As shared by participants in this study and seen in the collective experiences of the MCCM Pentecostals, health and well-being, both physical and spiritual, are the result of Spirit-initiated music-making. As music-makers spend time in personal devotion seeking divine unction in preparation towards ministration, they are able to attract the attention of the listening worshippers. Music ministration must therefore be approached from a spiritual perspective in order to produce the effects of health and well-being.

In addition, the ministration of music, as earlier indicated, must coincide with divinely-appointed times and seasons, but generally, as Kraeuter (2007) notes, “music played by someone whose heart is turned toward the Lord can have strong spiritual impact” (p. 21). Spiritual impact is made possible through the individual music-maker’s piety and devotion to God, and the unity of spirit of the musical group, and this is reflected in the outcome of the ministration.

Such ministration provides spiritual nourishment to the listening believer, and leads the ‘unbeliever’ to yield to the convicting acts of the Spirit. As seen in this study, through prophetic utterances, music-makers in MCCM (i.e., choirs, band, worship team, etc.). are instructed and nurtured to have a proper understanding of their musical service to ensure that both they and the congregants reap the benefits of music ministration.

In short, music ministration, if done properly, must achieve some spiritual results and produce therapeutic effects which include health and well-being for both the worshipping congregants and music-makers.

Pentecostal Worship and Primal Spirituality

Asamoah-Gyadu (2013) also argues that Pentecostal worship is consistent with primal spirituality. Citing Cox, he notes that primal piety “touches on the resurgence in Pentecostalism of trance, vision, healing, dreams, dance, and other archetypal religious expressions” (as cited in Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. 23). In other words, the concept of primal piety pertains to the revival of trance, vision, healing, dreams, dance, and other archetypal religious manifestations within the context of Pentecostalism.

Although certain features of Pentecostalism appear to have affinities with primal spirituality, there are some marked differences when compared to African traditional religious practices, for example. One of the differences is that, in Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity, the divine “other” lives in the believer and unites with the spirit of the believer to give him a divine identity. By means of Spirit baptism, the believer can communicate mysteries to the divine via glossolalia (I Corinthians 14: 2). The Spirit is also with the believer, and comes upon him/her to empower them for specific functions. Every believer

has access to the divine and does not need a human mediator to commune with the divine unlike the case of spirit possession of a medium in traditional African religion.

In Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality, a musical agent, such as a musician, singer, or worship leader, simply serves as a lead worshipper who by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit directs the minds and hearts of other worshippers toward the Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient Triune God. When it comes to the prophetic ministry, as the Vessels in this study indicate, the Spirit of God can speak to a vessel at any point in time with or without music. Modes of obtaining messages from God are thus left to divine discretion. Unlike in some African religious practices, where specific musical styles are required for spirit possession, no particular styles of music are required to facilitate divine communication with a prophet/vessel.

Musical Experience and Prophetism: The Link

As the study shows, music is experienced in various ways by the MCCM Pentecostals. For the Vessels, music may activate the charismatic gifts which may result in prophetic utterances. Music also serves as a channel for the execution of some divine interventions expressed through prophetic utterances for the congregants. Through prophetic utterances also, congregants may receive confirmation of divine interventions in their lives that have been achieved through music. For the music-makers and the congregants in MCCM, as they seek to touch the divine through their music making, they expect to receive in return benefits of healing, deliverance, and well-being.

The foregoing suggests that, in P/c worship, music sometimes activates spiritual gifts such as prophecy, and some prophetic utterances reveal divine

accomplishments through music. In this way, therefore, music affects prophetism, and prophetism shapes musical practices within the frame of the belief systems of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity.

Chapter Summary

An examination of musical experience and prophetism in MCCM shows that largely, it reflects Pentecostal ethos and spirituality in certain respects, including the notion of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity being experiential, the concept of encounter in worship, and the therapeutic nature of P/c worship. However, there are some marked differences when musical experience in P/c is compared to primal spirituality, in particular, some African traditional religious practices. The link between musical experience and prophetism is established through the lived experiences of the MCCM Pentecostals.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the research, the conclusions and recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies. The study investigated the role of music and the link between music and prophetism in Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity through the collective and individual lived experiences of members of MCCM, a church located in Accra, Ghana. The study examined specifically the following research questions: 1) what is the nature of music and music-making processes in the church's ritual life? 2) How is music utilised in prophetism? 3) How is music experienced by members of the church community? 4) What is the relation between religious/musical experience and embodiment? 5) How does musical practice reflect Pentecostal ethos and spirituality? The ethnographic approach was employed in this study. Fieldwork was conducted between 2019 and 2021.

Summary of Key Findings

The findings regarding the first research question are that MCCM has a highly intensive ritual life. The foundational/processual rites are present in each service (i.e., the rite of praise and worship, the rite of pastoral message, and the altar/response rite), with the rite of praise separate from the rite of worship. Ritual time has however been affected by the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Music ministration is carried out by three main groups, as well as individuals, accompanied by a band. The body of repertoire used in the church's musical practice encapsulates all forms of sacred music with emphasis on contemporary Christian music. The accompaniment is provided by

a band comprising keyboard, guitars (lead and bass), drums, percussion, and wind instruments.

Worship music is slow, contemplative and reflective, while praise is celebratory and upbeat. The approach to music making is from a spiritual standpoint, beginning with personal devotion of the individual music maker to the Pentecostal tenets with piety. Membership to certain music groups is by divine appointment. It is expected that music makers 'sing in the spirit', implying the total engagement of the heart and mind in ministration. The ministry of music is directed toward the divine. Music-making is both structured and spontaneous, and music is often accompanied with dance. The congregants are active participants in music-making as seen in their participation in communal singing and dancing with outward expression of emotion.

With regard to the second research question which focuses on how music is utilised in prophetism, the findings were that although music played a role in prophetism, the prophets/vessels do not always require music in order to function. Music, however, enables the prophet/vessel to be alert, to focus intently on the divine, and it also sustains the prophet/vessel in the Spirit for the duration that he/she is performing some of the prophetic functions under divine unction. Any form of spiritual music is appropriate in order to serve as an aid to the prophet/vessel, but it has to be properly ministered. There should be unity of spirit among the music-makers, and the total involvement of mind (soul), heart (spirit) and body as a unified whole. Intercessory prayers and deliverance sessions which are often outcomes of prophetic activity are all accompanied by music. Although structured, services are flexible to accommodate the manifestation of the Spirit which are unpredictable.

Concerning the third research question which has to do with the collective and individual lived experiences of members of MCCM, the findings are that prophecies often emerge after song ministration - worship, praises and choir ministration. A number of prophecies relating to music addressed the issues of permissible music, appropriate conduct for music-makers, and the benefits derived from musical service. Members of the congregation experience divine interventions in various forms through music ministration. These interventions include healing and deliverance, both physical and spiritual, elevation to new levels of service, and spiritual upliftment. Knowledge of these divine interventions in the lives of the congregants comes from prophetic utterances made during services. Through prophecies/revelations also, specific songs are given to individuals as messages for their reflection and meditation. The shared experiences of individuals in the study affirm the therapeutic nature of Pentecostal/charismatic worship.

On the relation between religious/musical experience and embodiment which is the focus of the fourth research question, the study shows that although the body plays a critical role in music-making and performance, worship must emanate from the totality of the individual, that is, the tripartite view of the person – body, soul, and spirit. To borrow Ryle's (2011) terminology, "spiritual agency" is thus required in musical worship, and bodily actions are often attributed to the promptings of the Spirit. The concept of musical entrainment is seen in how singers and congregants move in relation to music during worship and song ministration. Singing in the spirit means total involvement of the person as in the concept of flow but in union with the Spirit who is 'other'. The actions of the prophets/vessels are activated spiritually, yet manifested

physically. In prophetism, the emotive characteristics observed are explained as originating from the Spirit and are simply divine expressions being manifested through the prophet/vessel. Experiences of healing and deliverance however occur in the body. Lived religious experiences also traverse the daily routines and the congregational life of the believer.

With regard to the fifth research question on how musical practice reflects Pentecostal ethos and spirituality, the study supports the idea of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity as experiential. This is seen in the nexus between musical experience and prophetism in the MCCM context. The high-intensity ritual life of the MCCM Pentecostals enriches communality and the music rites greatly promote social bonding. The study shows that just like the speech acts in prophetism, spontaneous music is also characteristic of liturgical practice in MCCM. The musical experiences of the MCCM Pentecostals also buttress the concept of encounter in P/c worship and the therapeutic nature of worship is seen in the outcomes of the MCCM Pentecostals' experiences of encounter with hierophany. The study shows that although certain features of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity appear to have affinities with primal spirituality, there are marked differences especially when compared to certain African traditional religious/musical practices. The link between music and prophetism is seen in how music often activates some charismatic gifts such as prophecy, and how music serves as a means by which divine interventions of healing, deliverance and well-being which are expressed through prophetic utterances are achieved.

Conclusions

Overall, it can be said that music is an aid to the prophet/vessel, but it is not always a requirement for the performance of prophetic functions. Music-inspired prophecies/revelations may emerge when music-making conforms to the divine pattern of acceptable worship. The prophetic utterances described in this study, if they are valid, indicate that music facilitates supernatural occurrences. The lived musical experiences of the MCCM Pentecostals affirm the religious potency of music to trigger religious experiences, and the therapeutic effects of music in P/c worship. Active listening is required in P/c musical practice. Passivity on the part of music-makers and listeners alike during musical worship, yields no fruitful therapeutic benefits.

In musical worship, though certain practices are embodied, the body does not stand alone. Music-making in worship involves the totality of the person and thus, the immaterial aspect of the person cannot be divorced from the material. As Ryle (2011) points out, “a powerful creative force comes into being in the embodied experience of the sacred” which is referred to as ‘spiritual agency’ (p. 73). Spiritual agency is therefore key in music-making and prophetism.

Divine interventions through music do not require any intermediaries or prayer aids. Musical sound alone, that is, human voices and/or instruments, serves as the vehicle for such divine impartations. The therapeutic effects produced through spiritual music-making as this study has shown suggest that the service rendered by music-makers in Christian congregations is crucial. Music-makers must therefore be conscious of the significant role they play in such sacred contexts.

This study on musical experiences and prophetism among MCCM Pentecostals contributes to the extension of the theory of embodiment that, regarding worship in Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity, embodiment is an encapsulation of the material and immaterial aspects of human existence, that is, the tripartite view of the person. The findings of the study highlight the need for intentionality in the training and grooming of music makers in the ministry of music because of the therapeutic benefits of music in worship. Church policy should therefore take into account the development of both the technical and spiritual dimensions of the music ministry. For the MCCM Pentecostals, this research may serve as a reference point to reflect on the role music plays in worship – a reflection that may lead to an enhancement of musical practice to support the overall evangelical goal of the church.

This research of lived musical experiences and prophetism in MCCM has also brought to the fore the fact that in the spiritual domain, music has an effect on health and well-being. The study may thus contribute in some way to the emerging field of medical ethnomusicology, a field which “explores holistically the roles of music and sound phenomena and related praxes in any cultural and clinical context of health and healing” including the spiritual domain (Koen et al., 2008, p. 4).

The study further contributes to the broader ethnomusicological discourse on religion, music and sound as it highlights the following: 1) how musical practice in MCCM reflects Pentecostal/charismatic ethos and spirituality, and 2) how lived experiences of music and prophetism are shaped by the belief systems of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that, first of all, Christian churches should attach importance to the ministry of music and ensure its growth in both technical and spiritual dimensions. Secondly, P/c churches should be intentional about their preparation of personnel for both the music ministry and the prophetic ministry, and finally, the MCCM leadership should address any acoustic challenges in their places of worship for better music experiences for congregants.

On methodological approaches to studies such as this one, it is recommended that video recordings be included to support the data on musical experiences. In cases where new music is created within the ritual context, transcriptions are recommended. Again, while there is no doubt that some form of interpersonal entrainment occurs in communal music-making in general, it is recommended that timing data be collected in future studies to prove the occurrence of entrainment. This may be further enriched through a focus on new developments or ideas in neuroscience to support work in entrainment.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further studies may focus on examining musical experiences in other religious ritual contexts. Comparative studies may also be undertaken, for example on musical experiences in African traditional religious practices and Christianity.

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX A****UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND DANCE****OBSERVATION GUIDE****MUSICAL EXPERIENCE AND PROPHETISM IN GHANAIAN
PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY: A STUDY OF THE
MOUNT CALVARY CROSS MINISTRY**

The purpose of this observation guide is to enable the researcher to obtain information on musical experience and prophetism in the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry through observation of the nature of worship music in the church's ritual life, the music making processes, the musical behaviour of the congregation, and the role of music in prophetic activity. It is hoped that the results of the research will contribute the detailed study of musical experience in Pentecostal ritual and enrich understanding of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity and spirituality.

1. What is the structure of services?
2. What is the flow of services?
3. What is the duration of services?
4. What music is used?
5. Which instruments are used?
6. What songs are sung?
7. What language is used?
8. What are the music making processes?
9. How is music performed?
10. How do members behave towards music?
11. What is the nature of prophetic activity?
12. How is music used in prophetic activity?
13. How is prophetic activity linked to music?

APPENDIX B**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND DANCE****INTERVIEW GUIDE****MUSICAL EXPERIENCE AND PROPHETISM IN GHANAIAN
PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY: A STUDY OF
THE MOUNT CALVARY CROSS MINISTRY**

The purpose of this interview guide is to enable the researcher to obtain information on musical experience and prophetism in the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry. It is hoped that the results of the research will contribute to the detailed study of musical experience in Pentecostal ritual and enrich understanding of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity and spirituality.

A. Musical Expression and Pentecostalism (To Pastors/Church Leaders)

1. Does the ministry have a policy on musical practice?
2. What does the church see as the role of music?
3. How important is the prophetic ministry to the church?
4. How is music linked to prophetism?
5. How does the church's musical practice reflect Pentecostalism?

B. Music Ministry (To music/worship leaders, singers, musicians)

6. How do you prepare yourself/your group for ministration?
 - a. Musically
 - b. Spiritually
7. What goes into leading worship?
8. Are there any prophecies or revelations that inform how you minister?
9. How do you see your role as a choir leader/worship leader/singer/musician?
10. How do you choose what music to minister?
 - a. Planned
 - b. Spontaneous
11. What are your expectations of your singers or group members?

12. Is there a right and a wrong way to minister?
13. What brings you satisfaction about a particular ministration?
14. How do you use your body in ministration?
15. How does your work impact the prophetic ministry?
16. Could you share a memorable musical experience during ministration by yourself or your group or another person/group?
17. Was the experience linked to a prophecy or revelation?
18. Did you feel anything physically or emotionally through the music?
19. Did you react physically to the music?
20. How did you react?
21. Why did you react?
22. Are there any peculiarities about serving as a singer/musician in this particular church?
23. What makes you identify yourself as a Pentecostal singer/musician?

C. Lived Musical Experience (To all participants)

24. What do you think about the music in MCCM?
25. What do you like about the music generally?
26. Could you share a testimony or personal musical experience in church that you consider significant?
27. Was this experience linked to a prophecy or revelation?
28. Did you feel anything physically or emotionally through the music?
29. Did you react physically to the music?
30. How did you react?
31. Why did you react?
32. What is it about the music in MCCM that makes you see yourself as a Pentecostal?
33. What music appeals to you most?

D. Prophetism (To ‘prophets’/vessels)

34. How does music help with your work as a vessel?
35. What kind of music is helpful?
36. Could you share a particular experience where music had an effect on you as a vessel?
37. How did you feel physically or emotionally?
38. Did you react physically to the music?
39. How did you react?
40. Why did you react?
41. How should music be performed for it to be effective in your work as a vessel?
42. When is the music not right?
43. Do you always need music in order to function as a vessel?
44. How long have you been a vessel?
45. What are your particular gifts?
46. Could you explain the nature of your gifts?
47. How did you become a vessel?
48. What is it about the music in MCCM that makes you see yourself as a Pentecostal?
49. What music appeals to you most?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PART I: INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Musical Experience and Prophetism in Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity: A Study of the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry

Principal Investigator: Theodora Entsua-Mensah

Address: Department of Music and Dance, University of Cape Coast.

General Information about Research

This project is an academic exercise in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Ethnomusicology by the University of Cape Coast. The purpose of the study is to investigate how music is experienced by a variety of people including those who exhibit prophetic and related gifts within the context of a Ghanaian Pentecostal/charismatic church setting. The aim is to better understand the role of music in Pentecostal worship, and the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from music making in a specific religious community.

Procedures

To facilitate the investigation, the researcher invites you to take part in this project. As a volunteer, you will be required to participate in a personal interview of about 40 - 60 minutes. You will be asked to recall significant experiences relating to singing/music making activities within your church. This can be a recent or more distant memory so long as it is linked to a church activity and/or occurred as a result of your music making in church. Other questions related to the topic will also be asked.

The format of the interview will be conversational in nature and relatively unstructured to enable you to share the story of your musical experience, whether it is linked to prophecies and revelations or not. With your permission, an audio-recording of the interview will be done and later transcribed. Your lived experience is an important part of the qualitative inquiry that will be used in this study.

You are being invited to take part in this study because your experience as a member of a Pentecostal/charismatic church community can contribute greatly to this discussion.

If you do not wish to answer any of the questions posed during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. The interview will take place in a suitable location, and no one else will be present except the interviewer. The information recorded is considered confidential, and no one else except Theodora Entsua-Mensah will have access to the information documented during your interview.

The expected duration of the interview is about 40-60 minutes as stated earlier.

Possible Risks and Discomforts

There are no risks anticipated in connection with this research.

Possible Benefits

The study is expected to enrich understanding of the significant role of music in the growth of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana.

Confidentiality

The content of interviews will be held in strict confidence and will only be used for research purposes and for related writing based on the research. You will not be named in any reports. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure your anonymity. Recordings will be stored digitally and erased upon completion of the research project and its attendant writing. Some staff of the Department of Music and Dance may sometimes look at my research records.

Compensation

No compensation will be offered for participation.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Leave the Research

Your participation in this research is voluntary and this allows you to withdraw as a participant without penalty.

Contacts for Additional Information

You may contact the following persons if you have any further questions about the research:

Prof. Florian Carl

Theodora Entsua-Mensah

Your rights as a Participant

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of University of Cape Coast (UCCIRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you can contact the Administrator at the IRB Office between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 p.m. through the phones lines [0558093143/0508878309/0244207814](tel:0558093143/0508878309/0244207814) or email address: irb@ucc.edu.gh.

PART II: VOLUNTEER'S AGREEMENT

The above document describing the benefits, risks and procedures for the research title “Musical Experience and Prophetism in Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity: A Study of the Mount Calvary Cross Ministry” has been read and explained to me. I have been given an opportunity

to have any questions about the research answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate as a volunteer.

Volunteer's Name:.....

Volunteer's Mark/Thumbprint.....

Date:

If volunteer cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer.

All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

Witness's Name:

Witness's Mark/Thumbprint:

Date:

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Date: